

[ZOKU] SAYONARA
ZETSUBOU-SENSEI
SEASON 2



CINER NOTES

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EPISODE 1

PEERLESS TEA MUSHROOMS Z

Welcome to *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei* Season 2! We hit the ground running with a skit featuring Nozomu as a shifty salesman, trying to entice a room full of people into buying “Peerless Tea Mushrooms Z”.

What's he's doing is called a Pyramid Scheme. It's a fraudulent way of earning money that relies on an ever-growing number of investors who pay recruitment fees to join in on the deal (in this case, selling mushrooms). Since the mushrooms themselves have no particular sales value, the only real money being earned comes from the recruitment fees. And when the people at the bottom of the pyramid eventually run out of people to recruit, the whole thing collapses, with only the select few at the top having come away with any earnings to speak of.

By the way, Pyramid Schemes are illegal in both the US and Japan, just in case you were thinking of starting a mushroom company yourself.

TEA MUSHROOMS

Nozomu's special branding aside, tea mushrooms are a real thing... sort of. In the US, there's a drink we call kombucha. It's brewed using a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (called a SCOBY) that resembles a big flat mushroom. So it's not a real mushroom, it just looks like one.

Confusingly, kombucha means something entirely different in Japan. Kombucha over there is tea (cha) made from kelp (kombu), and the drink we call “kombucha” is actually known as “mushroom tea” (kocha kinoko) over there. It's unclear how the US ended up getting the names swapped around.

NAMES AND FACES



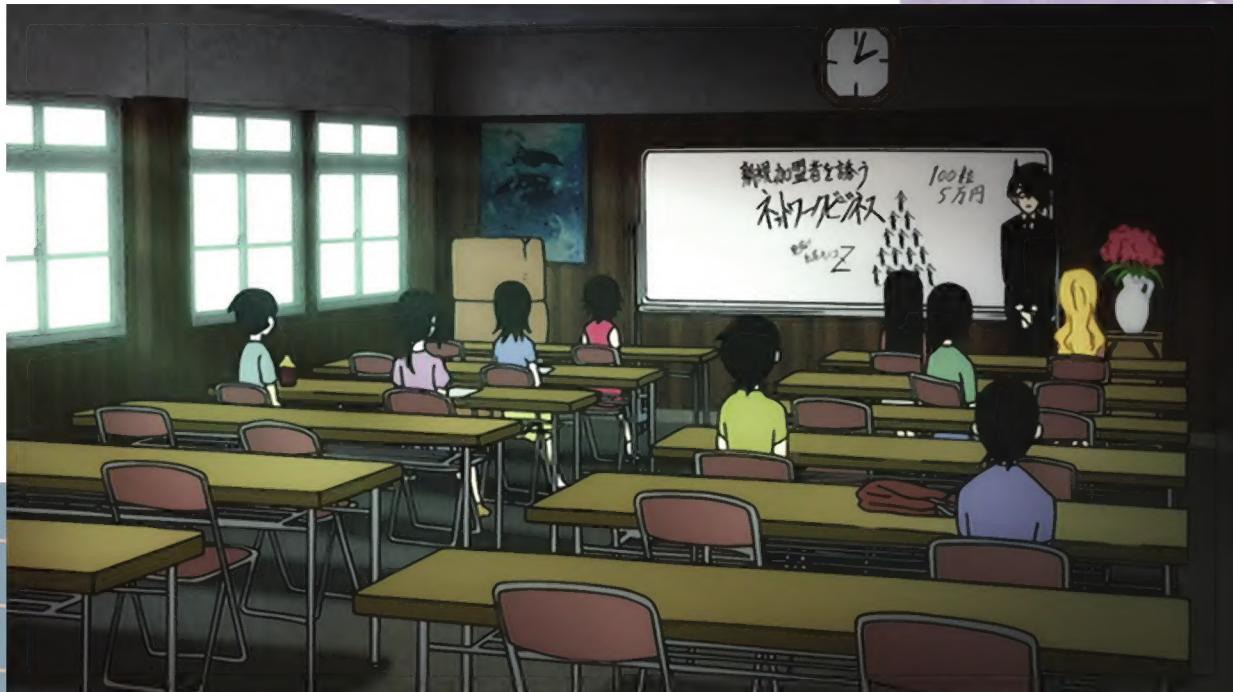
Though the suckers - I mean, potential investors that Nozomu is trying to woo all resemble his students, the names branded on their faces are actually the names of each character's voice actor. There's:

- Sawashiro, as in **Miyuki Sawashiro**, the actress for Maria
- Kobayashi, as in **Yuu Kobayashi**, the actress for Kaere
- Gotou Yuu, as in **Yuuko Gotou**, the actress for Abiru
- Yajima, as in **Akiko Yajima**, the actress for Rin
- Inoue, as in **Marina Inoue**, the actress for Chiri
- Gotou Sa, as in **Saori Gotou**, the actress for Ai
- Matsuki, as in **Miyu Matsuki**, the actress for Harumi
- Sanada, as in **Asami Sanada**, the actress for Matoi
- Tanii, as in **Asuka Tanii**, the voice of Mayo

DOLPHINS TO THE LEFT

When we see the first wide shot of the “classroom” where Nozomu is making his sales pitch, there's a picture to the left of the whiteboard that features dolphins swimming through the ocean. This is based on a real picture by artist Christian Riese

Lassen, an artist who painted fantastical ocean seascapes that were quite popular in Japan. So popular, in fact, that they were often peddled for ludicrous amounts of money by shady art dealers in Akihabara.



A HUNDRED FLOWERS BLOOMING IN PROFUSION

This is a real four-character idiom, but the kanji are slightly off. The original is *hyakka ryouran* (百花繚乱), which means “hundreds of flowers blooming in profusion”. But here, the second kanji has been modified from 花 to 華. Both kanji can mean “flower”.

Incidentally, “hyakka ryouran” is also one of Setsuna’s hidden sword techniques in the *Negima!* manga by Ken Akamatsu. Those of you who read the Season 1 liner notes might remember that Kouji Kumeta, the author of *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei*, has made it his personal mission to start friendly fights with Ken Akamatsu wherever and whenever possible.

I'M CHARGING

Our first Lupin-style text for season 2 says “I’m Charging”. It’s a reference to chapter 89 of the *Zetsubou-sensei* manga, which is titled “I’m Charging’, Yada-chan Said in a Low Voice”, which in turn is a reference to a novel called *Morning* by Osamu Dazai. (The original line in the novel is: “It’s a power outage,’ Kiku-chan said in a low voice.”)

The main joke in *Zetsubou-sensei* chapter 89 is the idea of “over-charging”: going on a long break, and coming back worse than before. For example, a band that goes on hiatus for five years, and comes back with a terrible new sound. So, applying that theory to the *Zetsubou-sensei* anime, perhaps it’s a warning from the animators to the viewers. *Zetsubou-sensei* has been on a break - will it also be “overcharged”?

LISTEN, THE BARON IS RANTING

Episode 1's title is a reference to The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen, a satirical collection of tall tales by Rudolf Erich Raspe. In Japanese, the title is Hora Danshaku no Bouken, where "hora" means "braggart" and "bouken" means "adventures". But for Zetsubou-sensei, the title has been twisted into Hora, Danshaku no Bougen, where "hora" means "listen", and "bougen" means "ranting".

Also, on every episode's title card, the number of the manga chapter that it was adapted from is listed in the upper right-hand corner. But this time, the text says "Original Volume 1 - Sleeve." Keep this in mind, it'll be important in a bit...

SHUUKAN SHIN-TOMO

Right after the title card, Nozomu opens a magazine and is shocked to find a racy picture inside.

The title of the magazine is written as Shuukan Shincho (週間親朝). This is a slightly altered version of the name of a real magazine, Shukan Shincho (週刊新潮), which roughly translates to "Weekly New Tides". It's a weekly alternative news magazine that started in 1956, and as of this writing, is still in print today.

The thing about alternative news magazines in Japan, though, is that they almost all contain pornography. In fact, Shukan Shincho is one of the only alt-news magazines that only covers news. So it's seen as the more socially acceptable choice for men to read.

BEAUTIES OF NATURE

This is another four-character idiom that has been changed. The original phrase for "beauties of nature" is "kachou fugetsu", written 花鳥風月. But here, instead of starting with 花鳥, which means "flowers and birds", the kanji have been replaced with 華 and 蝶, which are two separate kanji meaning "flowers" and "butterflies".

YAKINIKU SPECIAL

Yet another idiom. The text is supposed to be "jakuniku kyoushoku" (弱肉強食), which means "survival of the fittest". But the first and third kanji have been changed, turning the phrase into "yakiniku teishoku" (焼肉定食), which means "Yakiniku Special". (Strangely, Nozomu isn't even eating yakiniku, which is meat served on skewers. Instead, he's eating a tempura rice bowl.)

ALCOHOL-FREE COFFEE SHOP VON

This is a nod to Wild 7, a 1969 manga about a counter-terrorist motorcycle group made up of reformed convicts. There are seven of these brutal vigilantes in all, and their unofficial headquarters is a coffee shop named Von.

CRYING TEARS OF BLOOD



When the strange man in sunglasses reveals that he's part of an organization called Hamasho, he holds up a mask with red tears running down its face.

This is based on the mask that Orokamen ("Idiot Mask") wears in George Akiyama's famous 1970s manga *Derorinman*. Orokamen has a black cloak with a tall collar, and his mask is a giant, smooth metal face with slits for eyes and a mouth. He often cries long streaks of blue tears that run down his face in solid lines.

"WHAT DOES HAMASHO EVEN MEAN?"

When Nozomu is confronted about "Hamasho", he's not sure what the term refers to.

His first guess is "Hamada Shouko" (in English order, Shouko Hamada), a popular photo model who was also a TV personality. She released several CDs, and even did PR work for professional wrestling. English viewers might know her from a brief cameo appearance on a poster in a locker in the PlayStation 2 game *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*.

Nozomu's second guess is "Hamada Shougo" (in English order, Shougo Hamada), a famous singer-songwriter who made his debut in the 1970s. Though Shougo has a relatively low profile in the Japanese media, he has gained legions of fans through his many live performances, where he always wears a stylish pair of sunglasses.

Of course, both of these famous people are nicknamed "Hamasho".

FAMILIAR FACES, PART 1

When Nozomu is accused of being an apostate, everyone notices. And we do mean everyone.

There is a shot of townspeople who have all turned their heads to face Nozomu, but their faces are stamped out with names. The names all refer to characters from Battles Without Honor and Humanity: Final Episode, the last film in a five-part series of movies chronicling the violent, tumultuous lives of modern-day yakuza.

The names are:

- Matsumura (Tamotsu Matsumura)
- Kaoru (Sugita Kaoru)
- Kouno (Koujiro Kouno)
- Takeda (Akira Takeda)
- Okubo (Kenichi Okubo)
- Sugita (Sugita Kaoru)
- Eri
- Eda (Shoichi Eda)
- Mitsuko
- Yamamori (Yoshio Yamamori)



SIGNS AROUND TOWN

Behind this first batch of Hamasho devotees, there are signboards for real shops on the buildings.

To the left is Marubell Company, located in Tokyo's Asakusa ward. Ever since the early 1920s, Marubell Company has been selling "bromides" - pictures of celebrities, singers, and idols printed on bromide paper. At one point, it was such a profitable business that they published monthly best-seller charts by category.

In the middle is Jakotsuyu, a famous bathhouse in the heart of Asakusa. It's known for its convenient location, open-air sauna, and "black water" mineral baths.

And on the right, the first kanji is missing, but it's meant to say "theatre". Back in the Edo Period, kabuki theater performances were seen as immoral, and thus they were banished to the fields of Asakusa, which at the time was outside the city limits. Eventually, in the Meiji Period, kabuki regained its dignified status, but Asakusa had already been indelibly changed. The area became famous for Asakusa Rokku, a theater district full of kabuki theaters, opera houses, vaudeville shows, and more.

FAMILIAR FACES, PART 2

Next we see a group of people at a fish market, who are also revealed to be part of Hamasho!

But before they don their masks, their faces are stamped with the names of characters from Odagiri Hotaru's manga series The Betrayal Knows My Name. Written in 2005, it was the story of an orphan with mysterious empathic powers.

The names are:

- Murasame (Tsukumo Murasame)
- Giou (Takashiro Giou)
- Luka (Luka Crosszeria)
- Sakurai (Yuki Sakurai)



CATCH OF THE DAY

The banner in the background of the fish market reads “kujira-gami”, which means “whale god”. This is referring to a 1962 movie called Whale God, a cryptic film about a fishing village filled with brutal and mysterious characters, who are all plagued by a whale that kills anyone who tries to attack it.

FAMILIAR FACES, PART 3



Nozomu attempts to escape by train, but the members of Hamasho are already onto him.

Before they put on their masks, the people on the train have faces stamped with the names of actors from the 2004 French film 36th Precinct. It's the story of two policemen who are vying to become the next chief of the Paris Criminal Police, while also searching for a gang of violent thieves.

The names are:

- Mylène (Mylène Demongeot)
- Gérard (Gérard Depardieu)
- Daniel (Daniel Duval)
- Roschdy (Roschdy Zem)
- Valeria (Valeria Golino)
- Francis (Francis Renaud)
- Catherine (Catherine Marchal)
- André (André Dussollier)

WHAT IS THIS UMBRELLA FRAMES



This huge billboard (that Nozomu is about to jump through) features a black-and-white picture of a man holding an umbrella. It's based on a real commercial for Ideal brand umbrellas that ran on TV back in the 1960s.

In the skit, famous comedian Hitoshi Ueki holds up an umbrella and points at it, asking, "What is this?" (Nan de aru?). Then he answers his own question: "It's Ideal!" (Idearu!)

SHADOWY FIGURES



There are three big bosses who are very upset that their minions let Nozomu escape.

Though they're cloaked in shadow, their silhouettes give them away. On the left, it's proud Prince Heinel from Super Electromagnetic Machine Voltes V. In the middle is Planetary Robot Danguard Ace's nefarious Emperor Doppler. And to the left stands Braiking Boss, the powerful robot dictator from the Casshan series.

SIEG HAMASHO!

Hamasho's minions all chant "Sieg Hamasho!" to show their loyalty. While this of course calls back to the real-life salute that was used in Nazi Germany, the leader's voice also sounds suspiciously like Gihren Zabi from Mobile Suit Gundam. In that series, Gihren adopted the Nazi salute and used it for his own nation, the Principality of Zeon.

A MAN WHO RESEMBLED D**WIN ZABI

And just to drive the previous point home, we're told that Hamasho was founded by a man who resembled "D**win Zabi". Filling in the censored parts gives you Degwin Zabi, Gihren's father and sovereign of the Principality of Zeon.

NICE BOAT

The motorboat Nozomu uses to escape has the word "NICE" written on its engine.

Back in 2007, an anime called School Days was airing in Japan. It was based on a high-school romance visual novel which



became famous for its shockingly violent ending scenarios. On September 17th, the day before the last episode of the anime was set to air, a real-life violent attack occurred in Kyoto - a 16-year-old girl murdered her father. Because of this, the airing of School Days' last episode was cancelled at the last minute, and replaced with stock footage of European scenery. One of the scenes was of a ship floating down a river in Norway, and a 4-chan user posted a screenshot of it with the simple text, "Nice boat."

This spread across the internet like wildfire, both in the US and Japan. "Nice boat" turned into such a popular meme that it's since appeared in other shows like Ef: A Tale of Memories, The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya, and of course, Zetsubou-sensei.

THE MYSTERIOUS MEMBER



Nozomu finds himself surrounded by Hamasho members, and the camera quickly zooms away. But if you look closely, one of the members is staring at you, the viewer! That stubble... those glasses... It has to be everyone's favorite art assistant, Maeda-kun!

A SHOCKING ATTACK

The leader of Hamasho knows Nozomu's (very specific) weaknesses, and sends out an army of big-breasted women to attack him with lotus roots. These busty ladies, with their black leotards and red-and-blue face paint, are a callback to the female Shocker Combatmen from early episodes of the original Kamen Rider.

"IF YOU'RE GOING TO AUGMENT ME, AT LEAST MAKE ME PART GRASSHOPPER OR PART BEETLE!"

Nozomu begs to be augmented into a grasshopper or a beetle - something "with a squeaky-clean image". He's referring to heroes from Kamen Rider, a tokusatsu series that's been running since 1971. The original Kamen Rider had a helmet and armor that resembled a grasshopper, and the main character of Kamen Rider Stronger had an outfit that resembled a rhinoceros beetle.

"AS YOU WISH! I SHALL MAKE YOU PART MOLE CRICKET!"

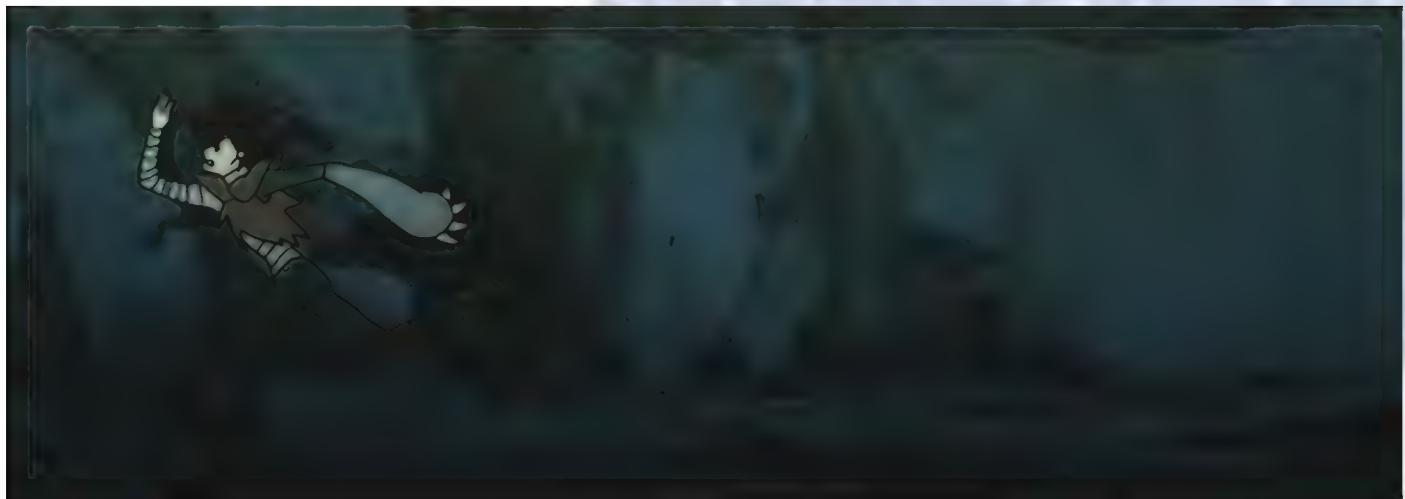
The term the villain uses here is "okera", which does mean "mole-cricket". However, it can also mean "penniless". So there's a pun tucked in here about Nozomu becoming destitute.

A WRETCHED HIVE OF SCUM AND VILLAINY



As Nozomu lies naked on the table, a group of nefarious figures looms overhead. Again, we can't see their features, but from the silhouettes, we can tell that they're all monsters from the original Kamen Rider series. From left to right, it's: Man Spider, the villain in the very first episode; Wasp Woman from episode 8 (her antennae are missing, but the saber gives it away); Scorpion Man from episode 3; Mantis Man from episode 5; and Bat Man from episode 2.

NOZOMU'S LEFT HAND



After his augmentation, Nozomu's left hand is a big paw with three giant claws. This is a nod to Arigabari, one of Shocker's monsters in the original Kamen Rider. Arigabari was part anteater, and had a similar claw for his left hand. (So apparently, Nozomu's wish to be a bug wasn't granted.)

CORNED ON A CLIFF

More shadowy figures approach Nozomu as he slinks back toward the edge of a cliff. Naturally, these figures are more Kamen Rider villains - this time, from left to right, we have: Mantis Man, Bat Man, Sarracenian (a monster based on Sarracenia plants), Scorpion Man, and Tokageron (a lizard monster who used to be a soccer player).

NOT YOUR NAKAMA



There are some characters from Eiichiro Oda's famous manga One Piece shuffled in among the pirates that capture Nozomu. The one holding swords is Zoro, the one with his foot on Nozomu is Sanji, the feminine figure in the back is Nami, Luffy is up by the mast, and Chopper's tiny silhouette can be seen off to the right.

A DANGEROUS PLACE

Nozomu washes up at “Cape Ashi****”, which is meant to be Cape Ashizuri. It’s a steep peninsula at the southernmost tip of Shikoku, and while it’s a beautiful landmark with a wide, wondrous view of the ocean, it’s also unfortunately a popular suicide spot.

THE HOLY NOSEBLEED EMPIRE

This fake empire name is a reference (of course), but there are two parts to it.

The first reference is to a manga called The Holy Motemote Kingdom, by Ken Nagai. (“Motemote” means “sexy”.) It was a comedy series about an alien named Father and a boy named Onnasky, who were constantly coming up with peculiar ploys to try and pick up women.

In anime and manga, when artists want to depict a man getting aroused, it’s often portrayed with a nosebleed (their blood pressure rises so quickly that it fires like rockets out of their nose). So part of the joke here is swapping out “Motemote Kingdom” for “Nosebleed Empire”.

But that’s not all. The Japanese word for “nosebleed” is “hanaji” (鼻血), but when Chie-sensei says the name of the empire, she calls it hanaji-boo (鼻血ブー). This is where the second reference comes in.

Many of the opening songs for the Zetsubou-sensei series are sung by Kenji Ohtsuki, who is part of a band named Kinniku Shoujo Tai. In 1987, the band released a song called Takagi Boo Densetsu (“The Legend of Boo Takagi”).

There was just one problem: Boo Takagi is a real person. He’s a comedian and musician, and part of a popular band called The Drifters. Shortly after releasing Takagi Boo Densetsu, Kinniku Shoujo Tai received threats from Takagi’s legal representative*, and they were forced to recall the album. So, since they couldn’t legally sing “Takagi Boo Densetsu”, they would change it slightly to “Hanaji-Boo Densetsu” whenever they performed it live.

(* = In a bizarre twist, it was later discovered that the person claiming to be Takagi’s legal representative wasn’t actually affiliated with him at all. Kinniku Shoujo Tai eventually got personal approval from Takagi to release the song, and they re-recorded it and released it in 1989 as “Ganso Takagi Boo Densetsu”.)

THIS CLASS HAS MANY ISSUES, THANK YOU FOR YOUR UNDERSTANDING

This episode title is based on Kenji Miyazawa’s story “The Restaurant of Many Orders”. In the original story, two exhausted hunters are lured into a restaurant in the middle of the forest. And inside the restaurant, there’s a sign that says, “This restaurant has many orders, thank you for your understanding.” The hunters think that “many orders” refers to the restaurant’s popularity, but actually, they’re being tricked into following “many orders” (like removing their clothes and covering themselves in strange substances) so that the mysterious proprietor can devour them.

DRINK TO YOUR HEALTH

When Nami makes her grand appearance in the classroom, there are papers to the right of the blackboard that read: "Vitamin Water contains Vitamin C, Vitamin B6, and royal jelly. With today's hectic lifestyle in mind, it's a beverage made for body care." This blurb is from a commercial for Vitamin Water, a vitamin supplement drink sold by Suntory in Japan. Not to be confused with Glaceau's Vitamin Water, which is an American drink that comes in several different flavors and colors, Suntory's Vitamin Water is a light yellow color and has a sweet lemon flavor.

The camera leaves Nami for a few cuts, and when it returns, the papers have changed to read: "In some cases, leaves from this stone-ground tea might gather at the bottom of the bottle. Please shake before drinking." This is a notice that's printed on bottles of Suntory's Iyemon brand of green tea, which is said to be crafted by "master tea blenders".

What's more, the frames above the blackboard now read: "Brewed with purity, this refreshing tea has a richness that comes from being crafted with nature's fresh spring water." Though it's slightly changed, this is a marketing blurb from Suntory's Iyemon Koime, a stronger version of their Iyemon tea. The real blurb is: "Brewed with pure water, this fragrant, refreshing tea has a mild richness that comes from being crafted with the fresh spring water from Yamazaki in Kyoto."

A JUICY SLOGAN

"100% juice, made from a blend of several varieties of grape" is the slogan for 100 Can Grape, a brand of canned grape juice from the beverage company Kagome.

SQUEAKY CLEAN

There are two different shots where the frames above the blackboard read: "A super-refreshing sanitary wipe for all the oil and grime of where you've been." This is referring to Gatsby's Facial Paper, a disposable facial wipe that comes in several varieties. There's "Ice Type" which contains menthol, "Moist Type" which contains hyaluronic acid, and even "Refresher Type" which has a strong minty scent.

The first time this text appears, the sign off to the right reads "Beautifully White" ("bihaku"), and the second time, the sign reads "Dark-skinned" ("iroguro"). The joke is that there would be different types of Facial Paper depending on your complexion. Just to be clear, though, this isn't meant as a racial statement. Since as early as the 700s, the idea of having lighter skin in Japan was associated with education and high class (since such people spent a lot of time indoors), while darker skin was associated with field workers and the poor (since these people spent a lot of time outdoors, where their skin would be tanned). To some extent, this ideal of "lighter skin = beautiful" still pervades today, though some Japanese cosmetic companies have started to become more sensitive to its implications. For instance, in 2021, the Japanese cosmetics company Kao removed the word "beautifully white" from its skin products, replaced it with "brightening", and clarified that it was to remove dark spots. Yoshihiro Murakami, one of the company's executive officers, said: "We didn't want our use of the term bihaku to send a message that lighter skin is better."

NO LITTERING ALLOWED

The text above the blackboard that starts with “Please tell us if you don’t need a shopping bag” is a common sign that you’ll see in convenience stores across Japan. It’s a way to reduce plastic use and potential littering.

“CAN YOU TELL WHICH ONE IS SAFE TO EAT?”



As part of her little pop quiz to Nami, Maria holds up two mushrooms - a red mushroom in her right hand, and a yellow mushroom in her left.

The yellow mushroom is an *Amanita phalloides*, commonly known as the “Death Cap”. They are incredibly toxic - eating just half the cap is enough to kill a human. They’re most common in Europe, but they can be found in many places around the world.

The red mushroom is an *Amanita muscaria*, or “Fly Agaric”. These mushrooms are poisonous, but death due to eating one is very rare. Side effects are often nausea, drowsiness, sweating, and loss of equilibrium. They also have psychoactive effects, which has led to some people eating them intentionally. Of the two, this is almost certainly the mushroom that Maria and her friends ate.

FAILED ATTEMPT

When the other students explain to Nami about Nozomu’s failed suicide attempt, the words “SUICIDE” and “FAILED ATTEMPT” flash across the screen, along with a picture of a personal computer that’s been torn apart.

The Japanese word for “suicide” is *jisatsu* (自殺), while the similar-sounding word for “self-made” is *jisaku* (自作). So apparently someone was trying to build a computer by themselves, but their attempt failed.

THE SMALLEST OCEAN

Right before Nami's freak-out about being "normal", there's a sign to the left of the blackboard that reads: "Tears are the smallest ocean that a person can make." This is a line from the book Shuji Terayama's Poetry for Girls.

Some readers might remember that name from the season 1 liner notes, but just in case: Shuji Terayama was a highly influential poet, writer, and dramatist. He was most well-known for his countercultural, experimental works.

YOUNG GASOGASO

The boy in Nami's example skit is reading a comic magazine called Young Gasogaso, which is a play on a real-life comic anthology by Square-Enix called Young Gangan.

The characters for "Gangan" (ガンガン) and "Gasogaso" (ガソガソ) are incredibly similar.

And which comic inside is so normal, you might ask? Well, Kouji Kumeta had a one-shot manga named ligakari Neesan ("My Big Sister is Always Picking a Fight") that ran in Young Gangan, so it's probably that one.

THE NORMAL (LOCAL) TRAIN ALWAYS GETS PASSED

The local train, called futsuu ("normal"), is the slowest type of train you can take in Japan; not only does it stop at every station, but it will often stop and wait to let other, faster trains pass.

NORMAL COURSES AT A TRADE SCHOOL

"Normal courses" (futsuuka) are more commonly known as "general education" classes in America. So if you're at a trade school to be a plumber, gen-ed requirements like Sociology or Art probably won't help you much.



FUZZY MATH

When Chiri tells Nami that their teacher is a semi-truant, there are two pieces of paper up on the wall behind her. There's a ton of text packed in there, and it's all about the mathematical concept of fuzzy sets. The papers say:

"Regarding fuzzy sets, they expand on the idea of a normal set, where 'members either belong or do not belong.' Rather, it is defined by 'the degree to which a member belongs.' For example, in the set of 'Temperate Zones', there is the question of whether or not Japan would qualify as

a member. Most of the areas in Japanese territory would be considered temperate, however there are also some areas which do not fit this description."

It's most likely a statement about Nozomu's vague status as a sometimes-truant.



BAD DRIVERS

The examples of driving school students who “pass no matter how dangerous they are” have the stereotypical look of yakuza members (one guy has curly hair and sunglasses, the other is a middle-aged man wearing a chain necklace). The obvious joke is using “dangerous” to refer to the men being gang members instead of them being dangerous drivers... However, it’s also a prevalent stereotype that yakuza are really bad at driving.

FLYING TEXT

As Chiri speaks, the screen turns red and text starts zooming by from right to left. She’s talking about “Momogi Animation Academy”, which is a play on Yoyogi Animation Academy, a real-life animation school with several campuses across Japan. However, the flying text lines are all examples of why Yoyogi’s not all it’s cracked up to be:

- **You can get into the industry without a degree** - The animation industry has been understaffed for decades, so as long as you can draw well, getting a job at a small studio isn’t too difficult. However, turnover is always high.
- **You’ll get your tuition back** - In 2004, Yoyogi Animation Academy ran advertisements for their “Tuition Reimbursement System”. The claim was, if you cancelled your enrollment, all your tuition would be returned. However, this wasn’t the case; when students cancelled, they lost large amounts of money. It was bad enough that the Fair Trade Commission charged them with violating the Act against Unjustifiable Premiums and Misleading Representations.
- **Old guys with cameras coming to secretly photograph the culture festival**
- **Applying for the Civil Rehabilitation Act** - In 2006, Yoyogi Animation Academy filed for the Civil Rehabilitation Act, which is similar to bankruptcy. They claimed that student enrollment was down, which was true... However, the more pressing issue was that the previous chairman had been fired, and as an act of revenge, he took the finance books and hanko stamp (needed to make bank withdrawals) with him.
- **Comedy class established** - In 2005, Yoyogi offered a course on comedy. It was so unpopular that after one year, it was gone.
- **Voice Acting Track enrollment fee covers for other departments** - Getting into voice acting is a huge dream for many; there’s no shortage of people who want to enroll in classes for it. However, there are many other departments at Yoyogi that strug-

gle to fill seats. So the Voice Acting Track, which brings in a lot of money yet costs less to run, pays for other classes which are expensive to hold and don't bring in much revenue.

- **The Fukuoka branch has no money** - Yoyogi's Fukuoka campus hasn't been in the news for low funds, but it's worth mentioning that Zoku Sayonara Zetsubou-sensei's Co-Director Yukihiro Miyamoto, Animation Director Kazyua Shiotsuki, and Key Animator Miho Ayabe all went to school there. So if anyone can comment on the campus being strapped for cash, it's them.

- **Raku**rou** - This is referring to San'yuutei Rakutarou, a famous rakugo comedian who was appointed Academy Director in 2006. But, due to financial difficulties, he left after only one year.

- The Fukuoka campus' student festival featured a life-sized, homemade, Styrofoam Gundam.

- **Not an accredited professional school** - Many vocational schools for the animation industry aren't accredited. However, that's not really a hurdle for getting hired after graduation.

- **Tokyo campus class size falls by half after summer vacation** - In the same way that US college class sizes fall after winter break when people decide to drop out, apparently half the people who start at Yoyogi in the spring are gone by the summer. (In Japan, school starts in the spring, so summer break marks the end of the first semester.)

PERFECT SYMMETRY

When Chiri says that "being an ordinary truant has zero impact", there are more papers up on the wall behind her. This time, it's text from the Japanese Wikipedia entry on "Symmetry":

"Symmetry in the fine arts refers to the beauty inherent in a subject that can have a line drawn down its center, and the result is bilateral symmetry. In real life, no human being has a body that is perfectly symmetrical. Therefore, it is said that symmetry of form is an idealized style of beauty." This has a clear connection with Chiri, a girl whose hair is perfectly parted.

BRIGHT EYES

After Chiri's introduction slate, there are posters all around the board saying things like "Removes red-eye" and "Restores eye focus and muscle control". These are all marketing blurbs for a brand of eye drops called Smile PIT. It comes in several different varieties, one of which is "Super Cool" - which, in this context, means that the drops will give cooling relief.

"AFTER ALL, THIS CLASS HAS 31... NO, 32 HOPELESS STUDENTS!"

The class that actually has 31 students is Negima's class in Negima! Master Negi Magi.

THE STUDENT ROSTER

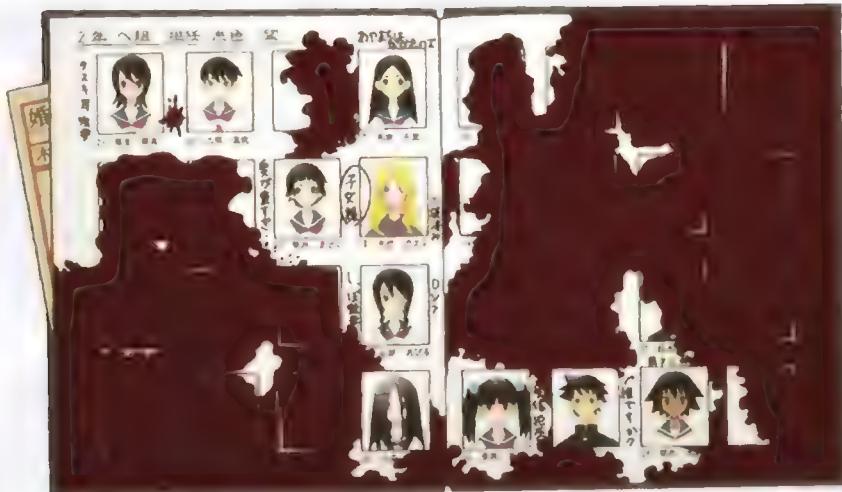
Though most of the book is covered in "not blood", we can see that Nozomu has made some notes about his students.

There's a note penciled next to Harumi that reads, "Likes tanuki ears." Above Chiri it says, "Does not tolerate mistakes." To the left of Matoi is, "Her love is too heavy." Next to Kaere, it says "Settled out of court", with "REPATRIATED"



in a big circle. To the left of Abiru, it says, "Likes tails," and on the right it says, "DV?" To Meru's right is the sage advice, "Don't let her have reception", and next to Maria he asks, "Who is this?" And finally, just above Maria is the entry for Sonokou Suzuki. His picture is covered in not blood, but he's shown up in the anime a few times - he's the heavyset guy with thick glasses and a helmet haircut. Written underneath his name, it says, "Lives and breathes moe anime."

Also, on the left side of the book, we can see a yellow sheet of paper that's been stuffed between the pages... It's a marriage registration form, most likely from Chiri.



RULES TO LIVE BY

As Nozomu is explaining about the not blood, there are two framed pictures above the blackboard. The text written inside them is the Iron Code of the Shinsengumi, five rules that all members had to follow:

1. One must always follow the samurai code
2. Once in the Shinsengumi, one must never leave it
3. One must not raise money privately
4. One must not handle other people's litigation at one's own discretion
5. One must not engage in personal fights

The Shinsengumi was a special police force that was founded to protect Shogunate representatives in Kyoto during the tumultuous period leading into the Meiji Era. There are no historically contemporary materials showing that the Shinsengumi followed this Iron Code, so while it's not impossible that the rules are legit, it's also possible that they're a part of early Shinsengumi historical fiction.



KOTONON'S COMPUTER

When we get a glimpse of Kotonon's computer screen, there's a window filled with pictures of other "idols" - but actually, they're all characters from Negima!? Starting from the upper left, the first row is: Konoka Konoe, Chao Lingshen, Chizuru Naba, and Yue Ayase. The second row is: Kaede Nagase, Fumika Narutaki, Fuka Narutaki, Ako Izumi, and Natsumi Murakami. And the final row is: Misa Kakizaki, Misora Kasuga, Evangeline A.K. McDowell, Akira Okouchi, and Chachamaru Karakuri.

Her computer appears to be an eMac, which was originally designed for educational use, but eventually saw release as a cheaper mass-market alternative to the iMac G4. Technically it's an Apple product, but the logo on her computer doesn't just have a bite out of it, it's been eaten all the way down to the core. And as for her apps, she has Finder, Mail, Safari, X11, the Terminal, "Hotoshop" (Zetsubou-sensei's poke at Photoshop), and Microsoft Word all within easy reach on her dock.



WHAT'S HARUMI READING NOW?

Harumi's doujinshi this time is "Catcher in the Nose", a play on J.D. Salinger's classic Catcher in the Rye. The doujinshi cover features Akagi Shigeru, Iwao Washizu, Yasuoka, and Ohgi Takeshi - these are all characters from the mahjong manga Akagi, and they all have incredibly large noses.

GENSHIKEN TWO

Genshiken is a popular manga and anime series about a college club for otaku. The club's name is Gendai Shikaku Bunka Kenkyuukai, written 現代視覚文化研究会, or 現視研 - "genshiken" - for short. However, those three kanji don't form a real word, so the title of the manga series is just written in hiragana, which is easy to read and pronounce (げんしけん). The same goes for its sequel series, Genshiken 2: げんしけん2.

But the box in Kiri's room just has to be complicated. Not only does it have "Genshiken" written on it in kanji, it uses a very formal kanji for the numeral "2", which gives us "現視研式".

THAT WAS TOUGH

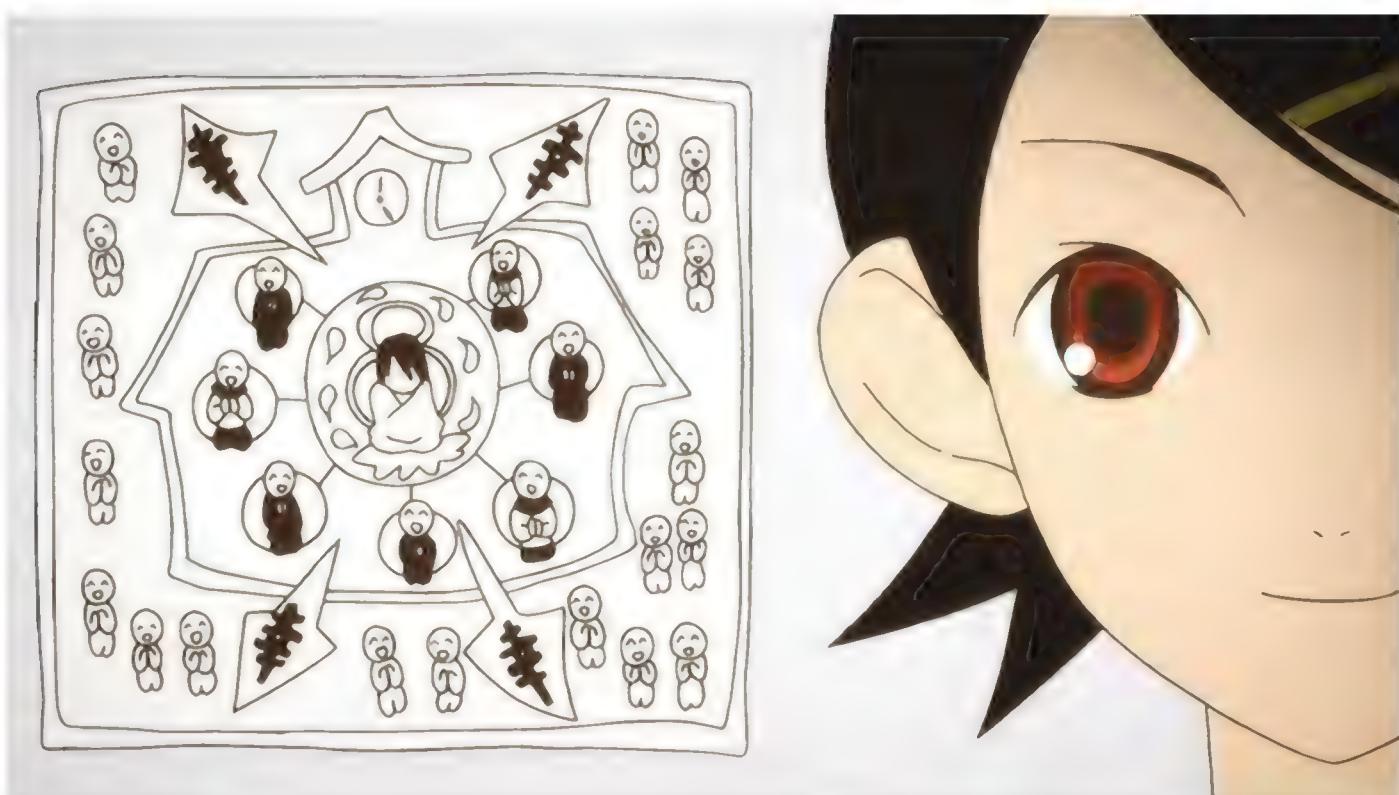
This is a message from the animators, letting us know that animating that previous shot (with the camera spinning around Nami and Nozomu) was no simple feat!

TRÄUMEREI

Just to be clear, no, Träumerei does not have lyrics. (Especially not crazy lyrics like Kafuka's!) The song is Movement No. 7 of Kinderszenen, a 13-piece composition by Robert Schumann, written in 1838.

KIRI'S MYSTICAL POWER

When Kafuka explains that the school is prosperous because Kiri stays in it, there's a diagram behind her to the left. It's based on the Mandala of the Two Realms, a famous pair of Japanese depictions of the Buddhist cosmos - specifically, it's based on the Womb Realm, which shows Vairocana Buddha surrounded by eight Buddhas and bodhisattvas, all within a square core, and then many deities outside the core.



In Kafuka's interpretation, Kiri has taken the place of Vairocana Buddha, and the square core has become the school building.

"MOM!"

Nozomu's plaintive cry for his mother is a reference to a 1960s commercial for Hanamaruki Miso. In the advertisement, a little girl is playing in the fields with her dog, and as sunset approaches, she calls out for her mother. Then, once she gets home, her mother serves her up a nice tasty bowl of Hanamaruki miso soup.

FORGET ME NOT

As Nami chides Nozomu for being so forgetful, there's text on the blackboard that reads: "Oh right, there was a story like that, wasn't there? I think I remember seeing it somewhere."

That's because this particular story about Nami fishing for sympathy actually happened very early in the manga; it was the tenth chapter. So this story easily could have been put into season 1... but it wasn't. This is the animators' roundabout way of saying, "Oh, was this a thing? Our bad."

WE'LL MAKE ANOTHER SEASON IF THIS ONE SELLS OVER 30,000 COPIES

30,000 copies is an astronomical amount for an anime DVD to sell. So, uh... good luck!

DEATH COUNTRY

In season 2 of *Zetsubou-sensei*, the next-episode previews are all distortions of real-life books. "Death Country" is a play on *Snow Country*, the classic novel written by Yasunari Kawabata. In the real book, the first line is, "The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country", after which the main character arrives in a remote hot spring town. But here, in the next episode preview, the main character is just looping through tunnels endlessly, forever.

EPISODE 2

BORN THE 3RD SON OF A NAVAL FAMILY...

This episode's Lupin-style text is: "Born the 3rd son of a naval family in northern Rhode Island in 1794." This is a brief biography of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, who played a huge part in getting Japan to end its isolationist foreign policy in 1854.

At that time, trade between America and China was increasing, so American ships needed convenient coaling stations – plus, any shipwrecked Americans who washed ashore in Japan were imprisoned and executed. So, to resolve these issues, Perry was sent by President Fillmore to convince Japan to open its borders to other countries.

In Japan, only Portuguese and Dutch ships were allowed to conduct trade, and even then, they were only allowed to dock at Dejima, a small island near Nagasaki. When Perry approached with his ships, Japanese officials ordered him to dock at Nagasaki, but he flatly refused. Instead he sailed directly to Edo (Tokyo) and threatened to burn it down if they turned him away. So he was permitted to dock at Kanagawa, a port close to the capital, and deliver his official message.

This was also a time of turmoil within the Japanese government. The shogun, Tokugawa Ieyoshi, died shortly after Perry returned to the US, and his young son was sickly, so Japan's response depended upon an indecisive Council of Elders. No consensus had been reached by the time Perry returned, but his eight warships, with their advanced military technology, ended up making the Council's decision for them. After a month of negotiations, the Kanagawa Treaty was signed on March 31, 1854.

WHEN YOU OPENED UP YOUR BANGS FOR THE FIRST TIME

This title is an homage to Touson Shimazaki, a famous writer from the early 1900s. Specifically, it's a spoof on the first line of his poem "Hatsukoi" ("First Love"): "When you swept back your bangs for the first time..."

OPENING PORTS

The word for "opening a port" is 開港, pronounced kaikou. The pun is that the word for "opening a school", 開校, is also pronounced kaikou.

THE OPENING OF THE STORY

Another pun. The phrase for "the first part of a story" is kaikan hekitou, written 開巻劈頭, but those first two kanji are the same kanji used in "opening a port", which is kaikou (開卷).

"CUT AND DRIED MACKEREL?"

Another pun! Kafuka says that Perry tries to open everything... Now, the verb "to open" is hiraku (開く). And the word for dried mackerel is aji no hiraki (鯵の開き), since drying out the fish involves cutting it down the middle, opening it up, and laying it flat. So of course, that's something Perry would do.

"MY UNOPENED EVA-THEMED CANNED COFFEE COLLECTION!"



This is based on a real promotion. Harumi's cans say "YCC" on them, but the real coffee company is UCC, and in 1997, they released a set of coffee cans with official Evangelion artwork on them. There were six cans in total, and fans collected them all. Then UCC did it again in 2007, and given the release timing of *Zoku Sayonara Zetsubou-sensei*, those might be the cans Harumi has.

But there have since been plenty more! As of this writing, UCC has collaborated with Evangelion no less than seven times, with the latest set announced in 2020, right before *Evangelion: 3.0+1.0* was scheduled to hit Japanese theaters (though the film was ultimately delayed to 2021 due to the Coronavirus pandemic).

RURUBU TRAVEL GUIDE ~DYING~

"Rurubu" is an actual series of travel guides published in Japan, though they've never done one about "dying". Usually they cover either specific cities (like Nagano or Hiroshima) or wide areas (like the whole southern island of Kyushu), and tell travelers all sorts of helpful information like where to get the best food and which sites are good to visit.

As for this "dying" edition of Rurubu, the cover proclaims "Welcome to Heaven", and then lists four different places: the Sea of Trees at Aokigahara, Tojinbo (a cliff in Fukui), Nishikigaura (a cliff in Shizuoka), and Kegon Falls (a waterfall in Tochigi). As you might have guessed, these are all (in)famous suicide spots.

"PERRY-SAN THREATENED THE PRINCIPAL AND FORCED HIM TO OPEN THE POOL!"

The majority of Japanese schools have outdoor pools, which are used for PE classes and swimming clubs. However, they're not open year-round. Most often, they're opened in June, and closed in September.

This episode aired in January, which is way too early for the pool to be open. But Perry did it anyway!

VEXILLE

Vexille: 2077 Isolation of Japan is a CGI film that released in 2007 to lukewarm reviews. In the movie, it's the 2060s, and the UN has placed a ban on researching robotics. So Japan withdraws from international politics, reinstates its old isolationist policies, and even covers the entire country with a giant energy field, all so the Daiwa Heavy Industries Company can keep working on cybernetics. Spoilers, it doesn't work out well for anyone involved.

This extreme isolationism, then, is similar to Nozomu's "emotional closed-borders policy".

RED AND BLUE BODY PAINT



Perry tries many things to win his way into Nozomu's heart, including painting his own body - red on the right side, and blue on the left.

This skin color scheme is the same as Gill, the main villain in the fighting game Street Fighter III. Gill is the leader of the Illuminati, and he wants to be a benevolent world leader to his subjects... but he also uses things like kidnapping, brainwashing and DNA manipulation to try and bring about his utopia.

"I CAN GET AWAY FROM YOU WHENEVER I WANT!"



Nozomu's pose here is based on Dio from Jojo's Bizarre Adventure. Like many of the characters from that series, Dio often strikes unique, flamboyant poses. This particular one is from season 3 where he turns menacingly to the camera and points dramatically with his left hand, while covering his face with his right.

FREE FALLIN'

The scene where Perry is falling through a colorful dreamscape while Nozomu circles around him is reminiscent of a similar scene in the movie Urusei Yatsura 2: Beautiful Dreamer. In that film, the main character Ataru is falling through a collapsing dream, while a monk named Cherry circles around him.

SHICOLA

After Perry wakes up, Nozomu slips him a girlie magazine called Shicola (シコラ). This is one letter off from a real girlie magazine, named Scola (スコラ).

DO NOT OPEN

Nozomu has a whole list of things that shouldn't be opened. Most of them are self-explanatory, but here are the ones that might not be obvious:

- **Pandora's Box:** Pandora is a character from Greek mythology. In her story, there was container that she was never meant to open, but out of curiosity, she opened it anyway. Once she did, sickness, death, and evil was released into the world.

- **Trepanation:** This is an ancient surgical procedure, where holes were drilled directly into the human skull. Not recommended.

- **Electric Rice Cookers:** In the world of Akira Toriyama's Dragon Ball, there is a great sealing technique called "mafuuba" (demon sealing wave). Ideally, it's used to trap mighty demons in jars. But in the case of Master Mutaito, he ended up trapping King Piccolo in the only thing he had available: an electric rice cooker.

- **Large Wicker Baskets:** In the Japanese fable The Tongue-Cut Sparrow, a kind old man finds an injured sparrow, and nurses it back to health. His greedy wife, however, resents giving food to something as insignificant as a sparrow. Eventually, the old man is led by sparrows to a bamboo grove, and as thanks for caring for their friend, they offer him his choice of either a large wicker basket, or a small one. He chooses the small one since it will be easier to carry, and when he takes it home and opens it, it's full of beautiful treasures. On seeing this, the greedy wife runs to the bamboo grove and asks for the large wicker basket. The sparrows give it to her, but warn her not to open it until she gets home. Of course, she's much too greedy for that, and she opens it soon after leaving the grove. But instead of treasure, the basket is full of monsters, and they frighten her so much that she tumbles off a cliff to her death.

SHIMOIGUSA STATION

This is a station on the Seibu Shinjuku line - and more importantly, it's the nearest train station to SHAFT's headquarters. No express trains stop at Shimoigusa, so if you want to visit there, you have to take a local train.

"PERRY! PERRY! PERRY-SAN!"

When Kafuka calls out to Perry, it's a spoof on the opening to a 1966 anime called Sally the Witch. In the original opening, the cute princess Sally is flying through the sky on her broom, as children call out to her, "Sally! Sally! Sally-chan!"

IT WOULDN'T ALL FIT, SO THE SAUCES AND TOPPINGS WERE SERVED IN SEPARATE DISHES

Our next flash of Lupin-style text is a reference to one of Japan's most beloved curry restaurants, Curry House CoCo Ichibanya.



The amount of toppings offered at CoCo are, in a word, extensive. If you order them all, it's a ridiculous amount of food. In fact, it became something of a challenge for people to order every topping and see if they could "win" by eating it all.

In a perfect example (with plenty of pictures), a brave writer for the Japanese blog Gigazine attempted this challenge back in April of 2008. With every topping applied, it ended up looking less like a plate of curry, and more like a mountain of sauces, meats, and fried food. He described the flavor as "chaotic". But in the end, he was successful! (And here's hoping he didn't get sick afterwards!)

DECORATIVE DOLLS

This story opens with several shots of dolls in an extravagant display. This is a custom for Hinamatsuri, also known as Girls' Day or the Doll Festival. It's celebrated each year on March 3rd, to pray for the health and happiness of young girls in the coming year.

The doll display doesn't have to be nearly as fancy as the one shown in this episode, but it can be. Dolls representing the royal court are set up on a display that can have up to seven tiers. The first tier holds the Honored Palace Official and Honored Doll, which are meant to represent the Emperor and Empress. The second tier holds Three Court Ladies, who serve sake to the Emperor and Empress. The third tier has the Five Male Musicians, three of which have drums, one of which has a flute, and the last of which is a singer. On the fourth tier are the Minister of the Right and Minister of the Left, bodyguards for the Emperor. The fifth tier has three Helpers who also protect the Emperor and Empress. And then, if there are sixth and seven tiers, they hold various court paraphernalia like ox-drawn carriages, boxes of food, and items for a tea ceremony.

HER PHONE MUST BE HEAVY



Nozomu holds up Meru's phone charms as an example of "excessive decoration". Taking a look, most of them are references to people and animals that have popped up in the series before:

- Up top, closest to the phone, is Tarou Asou. He was the Minister for Foreign Affairs in 2007, and otaku cheered him for his stance on using manga to build bridges between cultures.
- Right below him is a stork carrying a baby. In the Zetsubou-sensei manga, Mikoto lied to Majiru and told him that babies are delivered by storks; so now, in both the anime and the manga, storks can often be seen flying through the sky.

- Next to the stork is the Emperor Penguin, the odd ying-yang symbol that's been in Zetsubou-sensei since the beginning.
- Below the Emperor Penguin is a blue eye with a teardrop coming out of it. This is a symbol used to poke fun at an anti-piracy campaign run by Japanese movie studios. In the PSA, which ran in

theaters in the mid-2000s, a woman cries a single black tear. It slowly runs down her face, then drops into a pool of black water and morphs into a skull. That's quite the way to say, "Please don't record this movie with a Handycam"!

- Behind the eye is Yoshiko Sakurai, the Japanese journalist whose image showed up several times in season 1.

- To Sakurai's right is that poor dog with the stick up its bum.

- The biggest charm, the one at the bottom, is a caricature of Shinzo Abe, former Prime Minister of Japan.

I'M GONNA MELT YOU ALL THE WAY DOWN

The phrase being used here for "melt all the way down" is tsukashi tsukushite. It's a bit of a tongue twister, but its real claim to internet fame came when it was used in an IDOLM@STER song called "The Agent Comes at Night". When the twin sisters Ami and Mami sang the song, they couldn't pronounce that phrase correctly, and it sounded like "tokachi tsukuchite" - which would be a cutesy way to say, "You melt (the region of) Tokachi all the way down." Many memes ensued.

THEIR HAIR AND SKIN ARE COVERED IN SCREENTONE

Screentone, in the context of manga, is a time-saving technique for shading that involves using pre-created patterns and textures. With manga drawn on paper, like Harumi's manuscript here, screentones are applied using semi-transparent film with an adhesive backing. Screentone is a great tool, and pretty much every manga artist uses it - but it needs to be used sparingly, or the final manga image tends to look overdone and flat.

DO THEY THINK THEY'RE MADAME DE POMPADOUR?"

Madame de Pompadour (real name Jeanne Antoinette Poisson) was born in 1721. She was a member of the French court, and the chief mistress of King Louis XV. When it came to things like art and architecture, she had well-known fondness for the Rococo style, which involves extravagant amounts of detail and decoration.



"AMUSEMENT PARKS ON TOP OF DISCOUNT STORES!"

This is a poke at Don Quixote, which is a discount shop in Japan. The image is a mix between their Osaka location and their Roppongi location... The Osaka location has a giant ovoidal Ferris Wheel on the front of its building, the only one of its kind in the world. It was built in 2005, then shut down due to mechanical problems in 2008; but ten years later, the ride was reopened and, as of this writing, is still in operation. As for the Roppongi location, it has - or rather, had - a yellow u-shaped rollercoaster installed on the roof. It was constructed in 2006, but due to noise concerns from neighboring buildings, the ride was never actually used, and has since been removed.

"CARS WITH DOLLS FROM UFO CATCHER GAMES IN THE BACK WINDOWS!"

Those who grew up watching Disney movies probably won't need this explained to them, but: the dolls in the window are the seven dwarves from Walt Disney's 1937 classic Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.

"ANTONI GAUDI'S ARCHITECTURE!"

Antoni Gaudi was a Catalan architect who lived in the 19th century. His most famous work is the Basilica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família (The Basilica of the Holy Family), a church in Barcelona, Spain. Work on the basilica began in 1882, but when Gaudi assumed responsibility for its construction in 1883, he made radical changes to its design. The final design calls for eighteen towers, covered in natural shapes and textures: twelve for the apostles, four for the evangelists, one for the Virgin Mary,

and a central tower to honor Jesus. On the inside, all the columns are designed to resemble towering trees with extended branches. The design is so extravagant that unfortunately, Gaudi did not live to see its completion. In fact, when he died in 1926, the basilica was only around 20 percent complete. Many other artists have stepped in over the years to aid in its construction, but as of this writing, it has yet to be finished. Currently, it's estimated that the basilica will be complete in 2026.

"THEY'RE ALL EXAMPLES OF NEIGHBORHOOD ART NOUVEAU ROOTED IN JAPONISME!"

Kafuka's explanation is starting to unravel at this point, but to help explain the terms, "Art Nouveau" is an artistic style from the late 1800s that wanted to break down the old distinction between fine art and applied art. Art Nouveau led to nature-inspired designs in interior design, furniture, glasswork, ceramics, jewelry - anything that had a functional use could now also be made to be beautiful.

"Japonisme", meanwhile, is a term for the Japanese art craze that swept the world after Japan reopened its borders in the 1850s. The brilliant colors and stylization of Japanese art affected almost every aspect of Western design, from paintings to clothing, and even things like landscaping and architecture.

RED AND WHITE STRIPES FOREVER

As Kafuka leads everyone out to search for their neighborhood's "style masters", there's a quick cut to a picture of a man in a red-and-white striped shirt, standing on top of a red-and-white striped house. That's Kazuo Umezu, the renowned manga author. Though his specialty is horror manga like The Drifting Classroom, Umezu has also had hits in other genres, like his comedy manga Makoto-chan.

Unlike some manga authors who tend to be reclusive, Umezu has always been an outgoing guy with a standout personality. He makes regular TV appearances, always in a red-and-white striped shirt. He even



painted the outside of his house in giant red and white stripes! This didn't sit so well with his neighbors who actually sued him over it; but in 2009, Umezu won the suit, so the candy cane stripes are still there to this day.

Also, if you look closely at Umezu there on the roof of his house, he's holding out his left hand, with his middle and pinky fingers folded down. That's called "gwashi", and it's a trademark hand sign from his Makoto-chan manga.

RITZY ROYALS

Next, we're shown a quick flash of a building that's artistically obscured. But upon closer inspection, we can see that it's the Palace of Versailles, a royal residence built in the 1600s by King Louis XIV. Though it started out as a simple hunting lodge west of Paris, by the year 1715, it had been expanded into a full-blown palace. It was once considered the center of French art and culture, and as such, it was absolutely opulent. Walls, floors, and ceilings were all covered in paintings, textures, and patterns. Rooms were filled with exquisitely carved furniture. Every part of the palace was dripping with wealth and overabundance.

Nowadays, the Palace of Versailles is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is open to tourists as a French history museum.

SNAZZY SHRINES

The next quick picture is of the Yomeimon Gate at Nikkou Toushou-gu, which is a shrine dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu. It's the most detailed shrine ever built; it took 4.5 million artists and craftsmen 17 months to complete. The Yomeimon Gate itself is covered in 508 sculptures of animals, both real and mythological: dragons, horse-dragons, lions, elephants, phoenixes, and more. There are also statues of people from Chinese legends, along with historical figures from Japan.

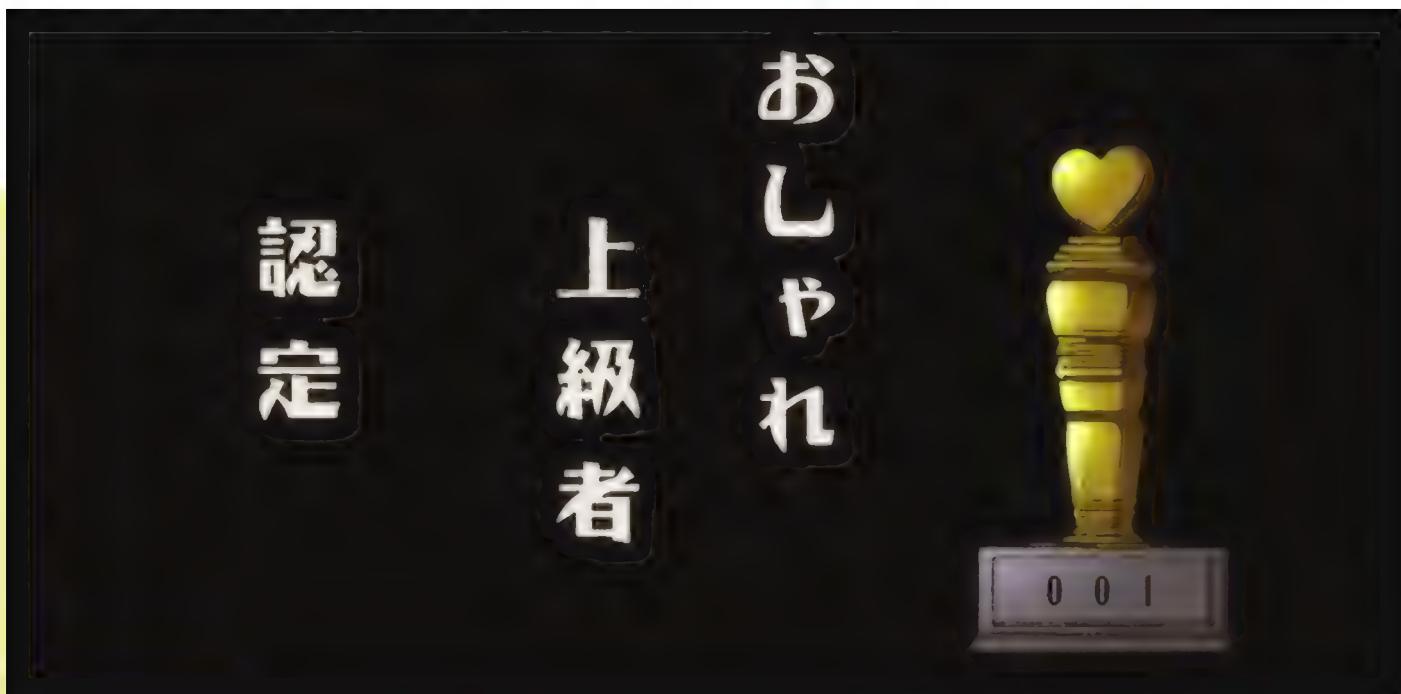
OPULENT OFFICES

The next shot we see is of the Meiji Seimei Kan ("Meiji Life Building") in Tokyo. It's one of the first Western-style buildings that was completely designed and crafted by Japanese artists after the country was reopened. Made in the Greek Revival style, its façade is covered in enormous five-story-tall Corinthian pillars. The inside is also a feast for the eyes, featuring acanthus-leaf carvings in the ceilings and parquet wood on the floors.

CLASSIC CATHEDRALS

And finally, we're shown a picture of the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. Construction on it was started in 1248 and finished in 1880, a difference of 632 years. It's the tallest twin-spired church in the world, and a marvel of Gothic architecture, with its 142-foot high ceiling and 90,000 feet of stained glass. Filled with carvings, sculptures, relics, and gilded shrines, it's no wonder why over 100 craftsman work full-time at the cathedral to tend to the building's upkeep.

TROPHY WINNERS



Every time Kafuka declares someone a “Certified Style Master”, the shot cuts away to a gold trophy with a number on the base and a heart on top. This is a spoof on commercials for Sapporo’s Draft One, which is a type of beer made with pea protein instead of malt. In the commercials, the prince of the Duchy of Draft One has set off to discover foods that go well with Draft One. When he finds one - gyoza, for example - a golden trophy just like Kafuka’s (except with a star at the top instead of a heart) is awarded to the food in question.

COCCO ZEROBANYA

This is a spoof on the popular curry restaurant mentioned earlier, CoCo Ichibanya. “Ichibanya” means “number one store”, so “zerobanya” would mean “number zero store”. It’s up to you to decide whether that’s better or worse.

“MA’AM, LET’S HAVE A LIVELY CHAT ABOUT SYLVANIAN FAMILIES SOMETIME, OKAY?”

“Sylvanian Families” is a toy line released by the Japanese company Epoch back in the mid-1980s. It’s little fuzzy figurines of anthropomorphic animals, who come with all sorts of dresses, dollhouses, and playsets. Imagine cute little cats, bunnies, and bears wearing colorful hand-sewn sweaters and drinking tea around a tiny doily-covered table, and you’ve got the idea.

Sylvanian Families were (and still are!) incredibly popular, both in Japan and around the world. The toy company Tomy handles distribution in the US and Canada, but due to licensing problems, they lost the rights to the name “Sylvanian Families” in 1993. Nowadays, they’re known here under the name “Calico Critters”.

“SIGNS PLASTERED ALL OVER THE SHELVES AT VIDEO GAME STORES!”

Video game stores in Japan are very busy places, visually speaking. There’s a lot to take in, including tons of signage. Most of the signs in Kafuka’s example are self-explanatory, but here

are the ones that might need a bit of explanation:

- **No clue when more Wi will arrive:** When Nintendo launched their Wii video game console at the end of 2006, most people knew it would be popular. But no one - not even Nintendo - was prepared for how popular it would become. Supply just could not keep up with demand. No matter where you lived in the world, finding one on store shelves was like winning the lottery. It took over two and a half years for retailers like GameStop to announce that shortages were coming to an end. By that point, the Wii had already sold 50 million units. In the end, it would sell over 100 million, making it one of the best-selling consoles of all time.

- **What selling should be like:** Meanwhile, Sony also launched their new console, the PlayStation 3, at the end of 2006. However, while Sony claimed they would have 100,000 consoles available at launch, the real number ended up being 80,000. To deal with lower-than-expected shipment numbers, some stores sold their consoles via lottery system. But other places, like the Bic Camera in Tokyo's Yurakucho ward, were "first come first served". A news report at the event showed hundreds of people restlessly pushing and shoving while store clerks tried to keep the crowd contained with rope barriers and megaphones. One man, twisted up against the rope and being pushed from all sides, shouted out, "This isn't what selling should be like!" The Internet took his plea and ran with it, turning it into a popular meme.

- **Fire sale on PS3s:** Even though people crowded into stores for the PS3 at its launch, demand for the console quickly died down. The console's high price, combined with strong competition from Microsoft's Xbox 360 and Nintendo's Wii, left the PS3 languishing on shelves. Though Sony was able to turn things around somewhat with the release of PS3 Slim models in 2009, in the end, the PS3 would be Sony's worst-performing home console to date.

One more thing to mention is that all the games on the shelf are Nintendo DS games. The DS was Nintendo's handheld game system that they released in 2004. While it had a slow start sales-wise, it was soon climbing up the charts at breakneck speed. By 2008, when this episode released, it was selling roughly 5 million units per month. As the Nintendo DS became more popular, more games for the system were released, and store shelves started to look like what you see here. Some of the (fake) games on this shelf are:

- Drain Training! DS (a play on the real game Dr. Kawashima's Complete Brain Training)
- Higurashi DS (based on the game Higurashi When They Cry, which actually did get story expansions on the DS)
- Pro Baseball DS
- Big Sister DS
- Ef DS (based on the game Ef: A Fairy Tale of the Two)
- Precure DS (the long-running anime PreCure has had several DS games)
- Busty Boy DS (this will come up again in a later episode)



The homeless “Style Master” that Kafuka introduces has a lot of stuff - including a refrigerator with an arm sticking out of it. This is most likely a reference to episode 23 of the anime version of *Higurashi When They Cry*, where a certain character meets an untimely end, and the body is stuffed in a refrigerator in a garbage dump.

BONUS ITEMS

Harumi gives the example of “A DVD set with so many bonus items that you can’t tell what the main part of it is”. The picture is supposedly a set for *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei*, but in reality, the Japanese DVD release of *Zetsubou-sensei* didn’t have that many extras. Each disc came with a special digipak, an art card, and some karuta cards.

SPLENDIFEROUS STYLE MASTERS

When Kafuka’s list appears on screen, it’s pretty clear why most of the items are there. But some have their names hidden, so here are a few explanations:

- **Miniskirts on the Red & White Show:** The “Red & White Show” is NHK’s annual New Year’s music program, *Kouhaku Uta Gassen*. The year’s most popular artists are invited to compete on the show, where they’re divided into the Red Team and the White Team. All the artists perform, and then the audience and a panel of judges vote to decide the winning team. It’s a family show, and was once the most-watched show on Japanese TV... so wearing skimpy clothes is kind of a tacky way to try and swing the vote.

- **Swaro*ski Cell Phone Cases:** The censored word is meant to be “Swarovski”, a famous Austrian glass company. The company is known for its beautiful (but delicate!) products like crystal, jewelry, and chandeliers. “Swarovski phone case” is almost an oxymoron.

- **Sh**en Maga*ine’s Homepage:** This is meant to be “Shounen Magazine’s Homepage”. The *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei* manga ran in *Weekly Shounen Magazine* - and apparently, in 2007/8, their homepage was a mess.

• **The Flyers' Seven Different Uniforms:** "The Flyers" refers to the Nittaku Home Flyers, a Japanese baseball team that existed for exactly one year, in 1973. In an attempt to draw attention to the team, the owner designed no less than seven different uniforms with all sorts of varied colors and markings. The initial idea was that each position would wear a different uniform... but then what would happen when a player switched positions? Unfortunately, the fashion show was not enough to save the Flyers. They were sold to the Nippon Ham company and became the team that's known today as the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters.

• **Japanese Dresses in D*or's Paris Collection:** Dior is a famous French fashion company. In 2007, their Spring-Summer collection was displayed in Paris, and it was a loud fusion of peplum suits and origami shapes. Models with their faces painted like geisha wore bright pink kimono-esque dresses and neon green coolie hats. If you ever saw someone walking down the street wearing those clothes, you would definitely look twice.

• **Gu*dam Astray Gold Frame Amatsu:** This is obviously the Gundam Astray Gold Frame Amatsu, a mobile suit from the manga series Mobile Suit Gundam SEED Astray. It's piloted by the series' main antagonist, and as such it has a complicated design full of black, gold, and red plating. It also has the Blitz Gundam's severed right arm grafted onto it.

• **Yuna's Costumes:** Yuna is a character who first appeared in the video game Final Fantasy X. In that game, she was a soft-spoken summoner in a long dress similar to a kimono. In the game's sequel, Final Fantasy X-2, she was an outspoken pop star who changed into various wild costumes every time she changed jobs.

• **School uniforms in SoreChiru:** "SoreChiru" is short for Sore wa Maichiru Sakura no You ni ("Cherry Petals Fall Like Teardrops"), an adult visual novel released in 2002. The girls in the game wear school uniforms, but unlike most uniforms which use solid, muted colors, these girls have short skirts and coats with eye-popping vertical red and white candy stripes.

• **Ancient Sea Monster *aran:** The name here is "Garan", a giant monster from the TV Series Ultraman Ace. He has wide, spiky hands and a pointy head that looks vaguely like the back end of a submarine. Apparently he's one of the only monsters that wasn't designed by the show's lead designer, Akihiro Iguchi. Instead, Garan was drawn by a 21-year-old dentist from Osaka, who submitted his design to the production studio. Iguchi made some tweaks to it, and the rest is history.

• **Hino**** Driving School:** This is meant to be Hinomaru Driving School, a real-life building in Tokyo's Meguro ward. In the US, most drivers won't pay much of anything to learn to drive and get a license; but in Japan, potential drivers will pay north of \$3000 to attend driving school. Learning to drive is big business, and the owners of Hinomaru Driving School apparently put their money into designing their building. It's a bit hard to describe, but the school looks like a triangular slice of pie with an enormous, red, five-story tall dodgeball wedged into it. (It's most likely meant to invoke the national flag of Japan, but...)

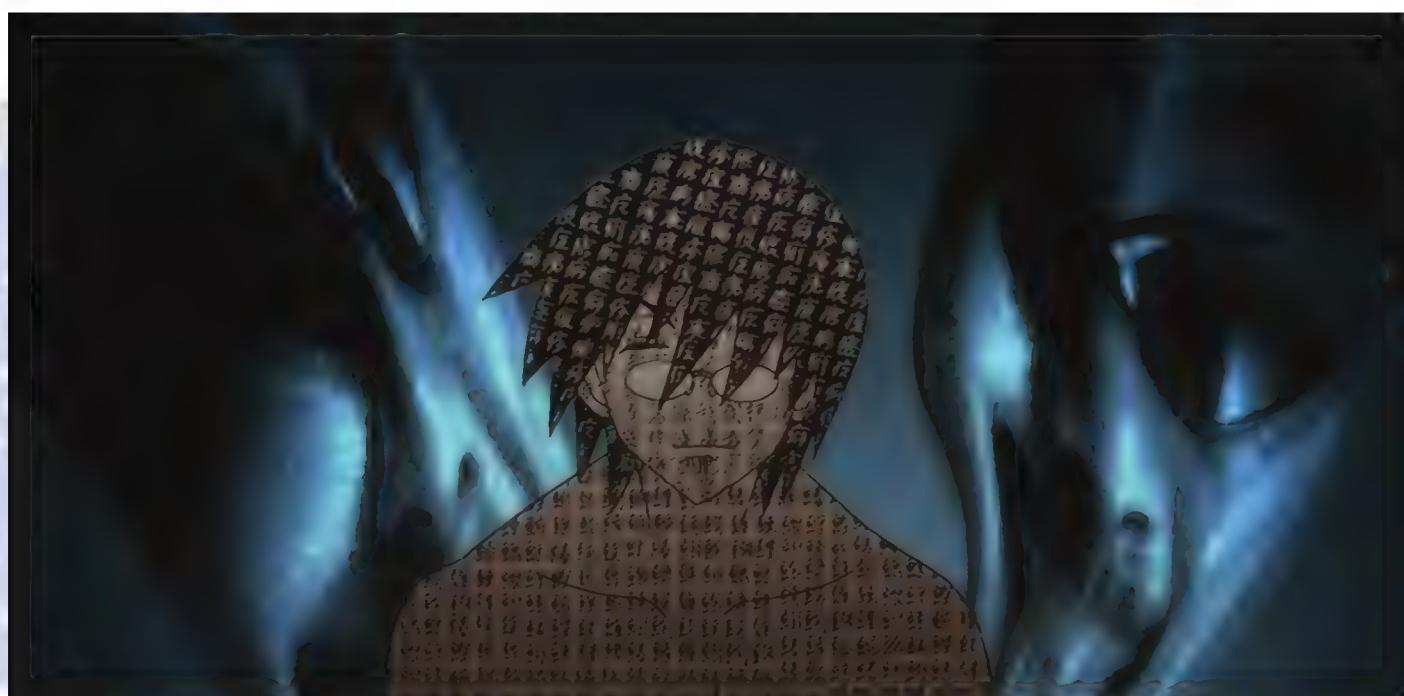
• ****yama Technical College:** If the Hinomaru Driving School was hard to describe, the Aoyama Technical College is almost impossible. Nestled among very normal offices and apartment buildings, the Aoyama Technical College looks like a building being devoured by a huge robot/insect/lawnmower. The architect, Makato Sei Watanabe, described his design as follows: "Architecture ought to be something capable of moving people's hearts and giving them a physical thrill in a way possible in no other art. ... Another purpose of this build-

ing is to assure that anyone who might see it experiences, both mentally and physically, a definitive feeling of excitement.”

• **Prof. Kawa****’s sour face:** This is “Professor Kawashima”, the neuroscientist who helped develop the Brain Age series of games on the Nintendo DS. The Brain Age games used a low-poly version of Kawashima’s face as the “mascot” character who would lead the player through different puzzles and tests. He had a wide variety of expressions, some more extreme than others; one of them involved puckering his lips as though he just bit into a whole lemon, and shaking until his glasses fell down his nose.

• **Manga volumes that come with picross*:** The last word here is “picross”, a type of logic puzzle where cells in a grid are filled in to create a picture. Some manga include these picture puzzles in their tankoubon releases, which is rather extra for an extra.

“ANY PART THAT DOESN’T HAVE WRITING ON IT WILL BE RIPPED OFF BY SPIRITS.”



Poor Nozomu is going through a recreation of a Japanese folk story called “The Tale of Hoichi the Earless”. In the tale, a blind minstrel named Hoichi is approached late at night by a mysterious samurai. The swordsman asks the minstrel to come play for his lord, and Hoichi agrees. The audience loves his performance, so the samurai asks Hoichi to return the next night, and instructs him not to tell anyone about it.

But that next night, Hoichi is found playing his lute in the temple graveyard. It turns out that the samurai is a ghost, and poor blind Hoichi has been bewitched. Hoichi’s friend, the temple priest, comes up with a plan to save him: he paints the Heart Sutra over Hoichi’s entire body, and tells him to stay quiet when the samurai arrives again.

Once more, the samurai comes for Hoichi, but the writing all over Hoichi’s body has turned him invisible. All the samurai can see are Hoichi’s ears, which the priest had neglected to paint. Angered by Hoichi’s “disappearance”, the ghost rips the ears off Hoichi’s head, and leaves. Hoichi is scarred, but free from the spirit’s power.

As for Nozomu, while he got to keep his ears, it looks like he forgot to write the sutra on his glasses - they’re missing in the next scene.

BEST AMONG FLOWERS IS THE CHERRY BLOSSOM...

Our third set of Lupin-style text is a poem that's generally attributed to Soujun Ikkyu, an eccentric monk from the 14th century. He wrote many poems, but this particular one was immortalized in The Treasury of Loyal Retainers, a famous Japanese play written in 1748. It eventually became a proverb: "Best among flowers is the cherry blossom, best among men is the samurai" is a way of saying that "the most beautiful things in life are transient" (cherry blossoms fall, a warrior's life ends).

ROUSE UP, O YOUNG MEN OF THE OLD AGE!

This title is a reference to Kenzaburou Oe's semi-autographical novel, Rouse Up O Young Men of the New Age! It's about his experiences living with and caring for his mentally handicapped son.

"I WRITE LOVE LETTERS USING THE OLD STYLE!"

This letter says "I really love your skin", which sounds weird until you realize that it's from an old commercial for skin cream.

In 2005, South Korean actor Jang Dong-gun appeared in a commercial for the mail-order cosmetics company OZIO. He was wearing a white shirt, standing on a seashore, and shouting out the lines you see in this letter. However, though Jang spoke Japanese in the commercial, it obviously wasn't his first language.

This led to a lot of jokes, and this letter here is no exception - it's written strangely, using a mix of katakana, old kanji, and obsolete hiragana. For example, one of the lines from the commercial is "Never change". In Japanese, that's "Itsumademo kawaranaide", written いつまでも変わらないで. However, in the letter, it's written like this: イツ迄モ變ハラナヰデ. It's just a subtle way of poking fun at Jang Dong-gun's accent.



"I WALK DOWN THE OLD TOKAIDO ROAD!"

The Tokaido Road was the main thoroughfare between Edo (modern-day Tokyo) and Kyoto back during the Edo period. It was one of five major routes that Tokugawa Ieyasu built to connect the capital with other areas of the country.

The Old Tokaido Road has long since been replaced by National Route 1, a highway for motor vehicles. But you can still hike along parts of the Old Tokaido Road as a tourist, and visit some shrines along the way. We don't recommend walking the whole thing, though - it would take roughly 21 days.

"WHAT'S WITH THEM?"



There's a little gremlin next to Nami as she says this - it's Chitan Tsubouchi, the kid with the big glasses from Katte ni Kaizou. He's wearing his LOL Suit from chapter 153.

KEN'OU UNIVERSITY

The kanji on this sign is 権應大学, which can be read “Ken’ou University”. But if you remove one little radical from the first kanji, you get 椎應大学 (“Shiiou University”), which is the name of the school in Genshiken.

OLD L**DOOR

This bullet on the “Old List” is meant to say Old Livedoor, in reference to the web portal and blog platform Livedoor. Livedoor was a hugely successful business, but in 2006, it all came crashing down when company executives were convicted of securities laws violations and manipulating account information. The company itself survived, but only as a holdings company. By 2010, it was sold outright to the South Korean company named NHN.

BATSU & TERRY

Another bullet on the “Old List”, Batsu & Terry is a manga that ran in Weekly Shounen Magazine back in 1982. It was about two high school baseball players who weren’t afraid to pick a fight with anyone, even their teachers. The manga was so popular that it won a Kodansha Manga Award under the Shounen category in 1984.

“ANYWAY, I SHALL STRIVE TO REVIVE THE OLD.”

As Nozomu’s old friend says this, three images flash up behind him - and they’re all things that have had the “new” in their names swapped out for “old”.

The first picture is a member of the “Kyuusengumi”. This is supposed to be the Edo-period police force Shinsengumi (新選組). But the “shin” (新) in their name means “new”, so here it’s been swapped out for “kyuu” (旧), which means “old”.

The second picture is a baseball player named “Kyuujo”. This is supposed to be outfielder Tsuyoshi Shinjo. Again, the “shin” (新) has been swapped for “kyuu” (旧).

And last we have a man reading a script, and his name is “Furuta Kyuuta”. The same kanji swapping is used here, but remember that kanji can have multiple readings. This time, the “new” kanji (新) is pronounced “ara”, which makes the man Arata Furuta, a famous Japanese character actor.

YUMI ITODA (FORMERLY ADACHI)

Yumi Itoda/Adachi is a real person! She’s an actress and vocalist. Anime fans might know her best as the voice of Julia in Lupin III: Farewell to Nostradamus, or as Shiraishi-sensei in the live-action film adaptation of The Way of the Househusband. Yumi Adachi is her maiden name; in 2005 she married comedian Jun Itoda, but sadly they divorced in 2009.

“HERE COMES THE TIGER.”

“Tiger” is series of German heavy tanks from World War II. Based on its appearance, the one driving across the beach here seems to be a Tiger I. Development of the Tiger I began in 1937, and it first saw combat in September of 1942 near Leningrad.

"DING, DING, DING... POP!"

The sound effect Nozomu's friend makes as he weighs his options is a reference to the 1975 anime *Ikkyu-san*. In that series, the main character is a boy with a shaven head named Ikkyu (based on the real-life monk mentioned earlier, Soujun Ikkyu). Whenever he's faced with a problem to solve, he sits in the lotus position, licks his two index fingers, and rubs them in circles on top of his head. Then a ticking sound starts, followed by the ding of a bell when he comes up with the solution.

ONE-DAY ZAKU

In the *Gundam* comedy spinoff manga *Magical Ensign Blaster Mari*, the main character, a fifth-grader named Mariko Starmine, is reading about the Zaku I mobile suit. In Japanese, that suit is referred to as the “Old Zaku” (旧ザク) to distinguish it from the more modern Zaku II. Mariko misreads it in the same way the *Zetsubou-sensei* girls are misreading all these terms, and she calls it the “One-Day Zaku” (1日ザク).

RUN, EROS...

The preview for episode 3 is a play on “Run, Melos!”, a short story by the famous Japanese author Osamu Dazai. Melos is a young shepherd who tries to assassinate a tyrant king. The king catches Melos and sentences him to death, but Melos pleads with the king to let him return home for three days, and offers his friend Selinuntius as collateral, to die in his place if he doesn't return. Though Melos faces many trials and hardship, he manages to return in time.

Here in *Zetsubou-sensei*, Melos sets up Selinuntius to pay the bar tab if he doesn't return. And it sounds like this Selinuntius might not be so lucky.

EPISODE 3



THE ODD COUPLE

Episode 3 opens in Harumi's room, with a shot of a poster on her wall. It's a... uh, "creative interpretation" of Suzaku and Lelouch, two main characters from CLAMP's popular 2006 anime *Code Geass*.

REFERENCE MATERIAL

We then cut to a shot of Harumi's desk. To the left, there's a doujinshi titled "Fire Man". The two characters on the front cover are dressed like Edward Elric and Roy Mustang from *Fullmetal Alchemist*, but they're actually Ritsuka Aoyagi and Soubi Agatsuma from the manga *Loveless*.



In the upper right-hand corner, there's another book called "Chawan-bushi". This is wordplay mixing "chawanmushi", which is a savory steamed egg custard dish, and "bushi", which here means "a characteristic way of speaking". The characters on the cover are from the long-running manga series tactics - the one dressed in red and white is Kantarou Ichinomiya, the dark-haired man in white and green is Sugino, and Sugino is shouting out "Muu-chan", the name of the little green youkai that he's married to.

And last but not least, the book in the lower right-hand corner... We can only read the letters "ZAN", but given that the character on the cover is Genjo Sanzo from Saiyuki, it's probably just his name intentionally misspelled as "Zanzo".

RADIO PLAY

Harumi is listening to a radio show called "Nekketsu Denpa Ningen Club" (Fired-up Radio Wave Human Club). This is a play on a real-life program just called the "Nekketsu Denpa Club" (Fired-up Radio Wave Club). It was produced by Starchild, a King Records sublabel that dealt primarily with anime. It ran as a radio show from 1991 to 2000, and then had a brief stint as a TV program until 2003.

What's more, the three low tones followed by a high tone at the start of the broadcast are the same sound that's used to begin every episode of Sayonara Zetsubou Housou, a radio show featuring the Sayonara Zetsubou-sensei voice actors.

Also, if you look closely, you can see that the dial on Harumi's radio is set to AM 1192. This isn't an actual radio station... but if you remember the concept of goroawase from season 1, these numbers can be read as i-i-ku-ni, or "ii kuni" ("a good country"). It's a popular mnemonic taught in schools to help students remember that the Kamakura Period officially began in 1192.

SMOOTH MOVES

Here in episode 3, we get our first look at the finished opening sequence. There's a part about halfway through where Nozomu and the students start dancing, and their routine is very similar to a scene in the 1995 Indian movie Muthu. Indian movies aren't generally popular in Japan, but a Japanese film critic stumbled across Muthu while he was in Singapore, and he loved it so much that he worked to bring the film to his home country. Eventually, in 1998, the movie was released in Japanese theaters as Muthu: The Dancing Maharaja. It went on to become a huge success, and was the highest grossing Indian movie in Japanese history until the release of RRR in October of 2022.

WHAT WOULD A FIGHT BETWEEN A GOAT AND A RUSSIAN WOMAN BE LIKE?

This Lupin-style text is referencing a recurring topic from Sayonara Zetsubou Housou: an erotic video titled "Goat vs. Russian Woman". The show hosts discussed who they would "root for", and in one episode, Kudo-kun even told the story aloud. (Don't be alarmed - it was Kudo's own made-up version where a starving goat delivers a Russian woman's letter to her husband without eating it, then dies and goes to Heaven.)

YOU'RE 17, DON'T YOU WANT TO PINCH YOUR NEW WRINKLES?

This title is a spoof on a line from Kenzaburou Oe's novella *Seventeen*: "You're 17 now, don't you want to pinch your new muscles?"

"EVERYBODY'S THROWING NEW YEAR'S PARTIES..."

There's a joke hidden in here. The Japanese word for "New Year's party" is "bounenkai" (忘年会), which literally means "forget-the-year party". What's more, the middle kanji (年) can mean both "year" and "age". So with just a little twist, you can see how Nozomu thinks of a bounenkai as a "forget-your-age party".

EIGHTEEN

One of Harumi's magazines has a picture of Chiri on the cover. The magazine is called "Eighteen", a play on *Seventeen*, a magazine aimed at teenage girls. Though many US readers will probably be familiar with the American version of *Seventeen*, which has been running since 1944, there is also a Japanese version that started its run in 1967. Though the publishing companies aren't related, the influence is clear.

There are a lot of headlines on the cover. From the bottom up, they're:

- Be on the lookout for these magic boots that make your feet 5cm smaller, and your legs 5cm longer!!
- You want to wear your favorite one-piece dress every day... But wearing the same thing all the time is boring!!
- Be cooler than anyone else this fall and winter with our "mature" plan. Fashion and makeup tips to help you look 2 years older!!
- 100 fashion items and stylish samples
- Riders, leopard print, fur, ponchos, booties, etc... We'll show you 100 complete outfits!

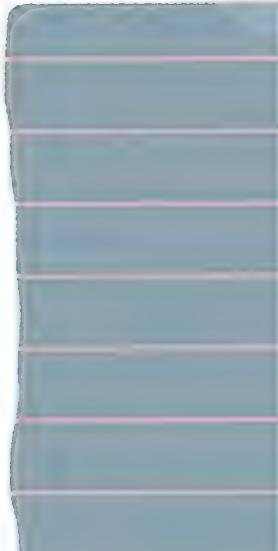
ANUMEJO



The next magazine we see has Nozomu on the cover! It says “Anumejo”, but this is a poke at the real-life anime magazine Animage. Animage began its run in 1978, and has been a staple among anime fans ever since.

There are a lot of headlines on this cover, as well:

- **Zetsubou-sensei: Lelelelelousu of the Flagellation - Last-minute update! A look at the long-awaited Stage 24 & 25!**: This is referencing Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion. In that anime series, the episodes were called “stages”.
- **Tekkaishi**: This is a play on the manga series Kekkaishi, which means “Barrier Master”. With the kanji used here, “Tekkaishi” would mean “Repealing Master”.
- **Mononokai**: A play on the 2007 anime series Mononoke. The title for Mononoke is written a little strangely in Japanese, using katakana for the first three letters, and the kanji for “mystery” as the fourth: モノノ怪. Here, for the fake series “Mononokai”, they use the same first three katakana, plus the kanji for “answer”: モノノ解
- **Jukai Girls**: A play on J.C. Staff’s Sky Girls franchise. In Japanese, the English word “sky” is pronounced sukai; it’s been swapped out here for jukai, which means “woodlands”.
- **Special Pinup: Break Through, Koishikawa Rocket**: This is a mashup of two different series. The first is Break Through with a Rocket, a short manga about motor sports from Katsunori Matsui. The second is Oh! Edo Rocket, a story that started out as a stage play and went on to be adapted into novels, manga, and anime. “Edo” is the old name for Tokyo, which has been changed here to “Koishikawa”, a district in Tokyo.
- **Use your Silver Power! Roujin Work**: A play on the four-panel manga series Doujin Work. Roujin means “senior citizen”.
- **Mobile Suit Gundam 000**: An obvious play on Mobile Suit Gundam 00.
- **Kunrenyou Shin-chan**: A play on the long-running anime series Crayon Shin-chan. In Japanese, the English word “crayon” is pronounced kureyon. That’s been swapped out here for kunrenyou, which means “used in training drills”.
- **Ookiku Buremakutte**: A play on the baseball manga Ookiku Furikabutte, known in the US as Big Windup. Ookiku means “big”, and buremakutte is a phrase from the song Hito to shite Jiku ga Bureteiru, the opening song from the first season of Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei. It means “to shake over and over again”.
- **The Familiar of Ero / Bonnou Coil**: This is another play on two different series: the long-running light novel series The Familiar of Zero, and Madhouse’s 2007 sci-fi series Dennou Coil. “Zero” has been swapped out with “Ero” as in “erotic”, and “dennou” (“cyber”) has been changed to “bennou” (“worldly desires”).
- **Girls Must-See Love ♥ Butler Book “The Charming Tokita”**: Just as a reminder, the Itoshiki family butler is named Tokita.
- **Magical Virgin Feature 2007**: It’s a common joke in Japan that if you’re still a virgin by the time you reach 30 years of age, you gain magical powers.



WHAT LIES UNDERNEATH

Underneath Harumi's copy of Anumejo, there's a magazine with Setsuna and Allelujah from Mobile Suit Gundam 00 on its cover. Part of the name is cut off, but it's still clearly PASH, an anime magazine aimed at women.

"CONGRATULATIONS ON HITTING YOUR 30S!!"

Matoi's voice actress, Asami Sanada, and Harumi's voice actress, Miyu Matsuki, both turned 30 in 2007. Normally in Japan, there's a stigma attached to women as they grow older, but these two fully embraced it. Miyu Matsuki even held a concert on her 30th birthday, and called it the Misoji Matsuri ("The Thirties Festival").

PINE + NAPPLE

Harumi is drawing a doujinshi about boys named Pine and Napple. They're based off of Coco and Nuts, two characters from the children's anime series Yes! Precure 5. Not only do Pine and Napple look almost exactly like Coco and Nuts, but we can also see another Yes! Precure 5 character, Nozomi, while Harumi is fast-forwarding through the show on TV.

"NIGHTMARE FREAKING ROCKS!"

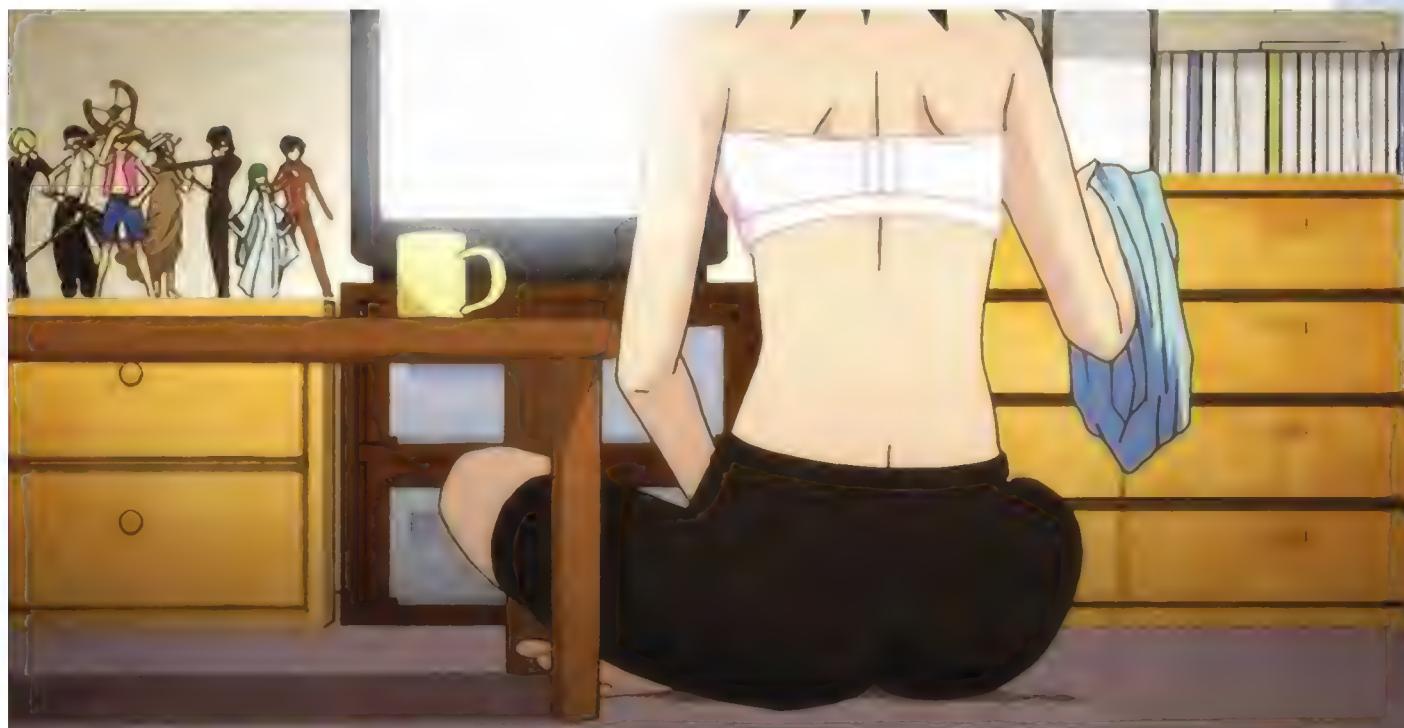
Continuing with the Yes! Precure 5 references, in that show, "Nightmare" is the name of a villainous evil organization.

SWITCHING SHOWS

Harumi starts her video search by fast-forwarding through Yes! Precure 5, but the next time we see her TV, it's fast-forwarding through one of the openings from season one of Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei.

FIGURING IT OUT

After Harumi takes her shirt off, we get a closer look at the figures near her TV set. Starting from the left, there are four One Piece figures (Sanji, Zoro, Luffy, and Usopp), and three Code Geass figures (Lelouch, C.C., and Suzaku).



In later shots, we can see she has a couple of Gunpla as well... though they're posed in dramatic BL fashion. On her desk, there's a pencil case with an orange version of Lord Cat from Pani Poni Dash. (It will change colors later on, just like the real Lord Cat.) And right next to her TV is a figure that's meant to be Zack Fair, the cheerful member of SOLDIER from Final Fantasy VII.

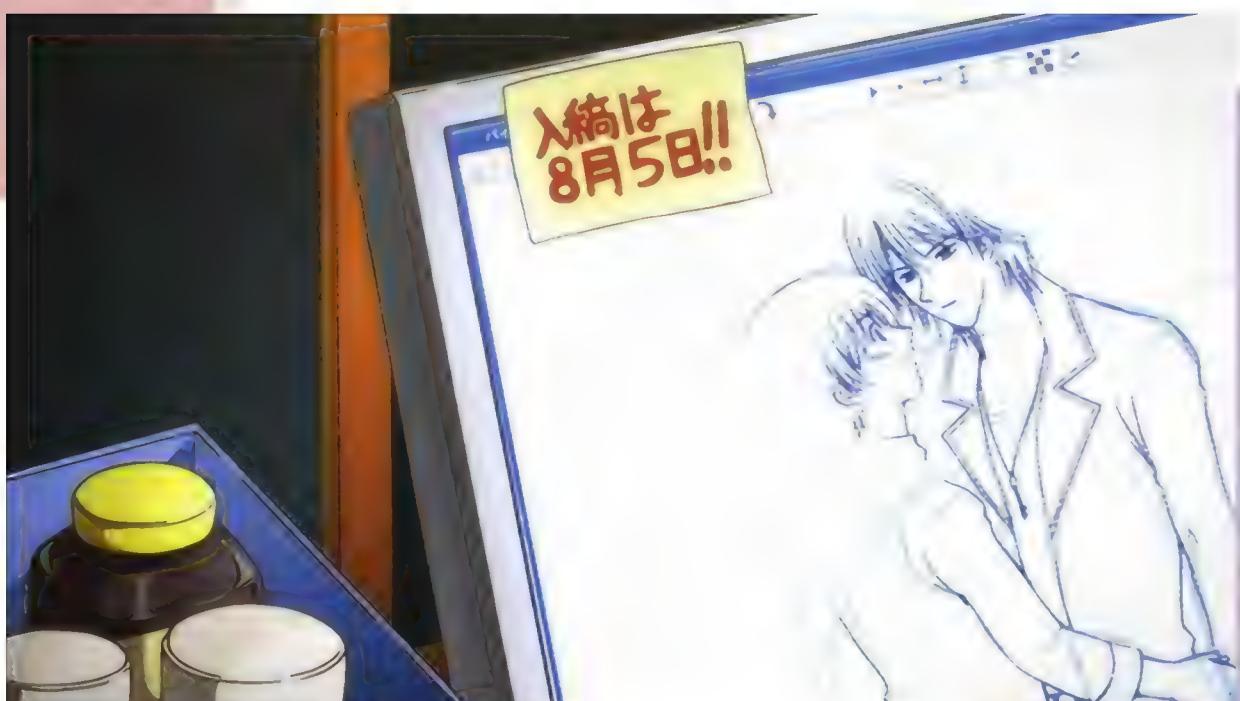
MORE OF THE CURE

Harumi's back to scrolling through episodes of Yes! Precure 5, as we see Cure Dream (Nozomi in her transformed state) fighting against Bloody, a high-ranking member of Nightmare.



WRITTEN IN INK

On Harumi's desk, among all her drawing materials, there's a dark brown bottle with a distinct yellow lid. This is most likely Kaimei Ink, a type of India ink often used by manga artists.



THE DARK HISTORY

When Harumi opens her browser, we get a quick look at her bookmarks. They include:

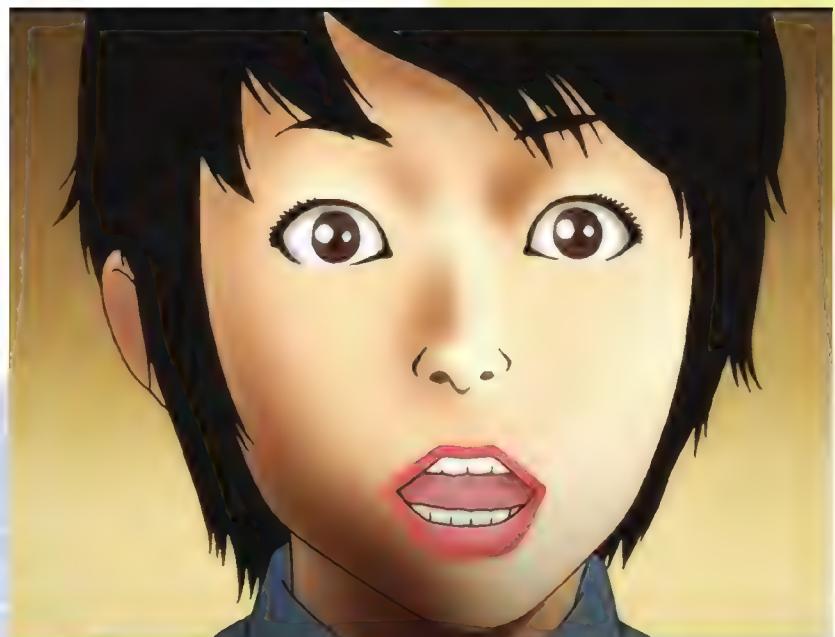
- CG Art
- Shota
- BL Search
- Coupling Search
- Boy's Love Links
- Demon's Sunday
- Gakuen Seven X (a play on the BL game series Gakuen Heaven)
- Pine x Napple
- I'm the Number One Sexiest (the title of an actual gay manga written by Junichi Yamakawa)
- Yao-blog
- Falling in love with you (the way this is phrased in Japanese marks it as Reiko Shiratorizawa's often-said line from the romance manga Tsurumoku Dokushinryou)
- Boy's Game Style (a play on the gaming magazine aimed girls, Dengeki Girl's Style)

SHELFED

There's an issue of Loveless on Harumi's bookshelf. Though we can't see the full title, the character on the front makes it obvious; it's one of the series' main characters, Soubi Agatsuma.

"...THERE ARE PEOPLE LIKE YUKI OKAZAKI IN JAPAN!"

While Kafuka says this, the camera quickly cuts to a realistic-looking woman with a shocked expression on her face. This is meant to be Yuki Okazaki, a real actress in the Japanese TV drama Okusama wa 18-sai ("My Wife is 18 Years Old"). In the story, Yuki's character is a high-school senior who goes through with her arranged marriage earlier than planned, all so that her grandmother can see her in a wedding gown. As a result, she's an 18-year-old married to a high-school teacher - a relationship which they both have to hide from everyone around them. Yuki Okazaki won the New Artist of the Year award in 1970 for her performance.



"I'M INOUE KIKUKO, 17 YEARS AND 9619 DAYS OLD!"

Kikuko Inoue, the famous voice actress, was born on September 25th, 1964. This episode of *Zetsubou-sensei* originally aired at midnight on Friday, January 25th, 2008 - which means it technically aired on Saturday, January 26th, 2008, exactly 9619 days after her 17th birthday. They really did the math for this one!

A COLLECTION OF DESPAIR



When we see Harumi's shelf full of CDs, the most prominent one is based on a real release. That's the cover of the *Zetsubou Song Collection*, which is an album of character image songs sung by the *Zetsubou-sensei* voice actors.

However, starting two albums to the right of the *Zetsubou Song Collection*, there are CDs with character names written on the spine. For example, there's a CD with "Kafuka" written where the catalog number would usually be, and the title of the album is "A Pact with God". This is the title of Kafuka's image song on the *Zetsubou Song Collection*. In fact, as you continue along the shelf, almost all the songs are there:

- The Chiri album/song is "The Rose Coffin"
- The Kiri and Matoi album/song is "Kagerou (Twice as Stuck)"
- The Nami album/song is "Main Character (Hitou)"
- The Kaere and Maria album/song is "Miss Universe(s)"
- The Abiru and Harumi album/song is "fetish"

"CHIRI-CHAN SITS ASTRIDE A JOBA MACHINE AND TURNS IT ON."

Joba is a brand of exercise machine that looks like a saddle. When the user sits on it, it pitches and rolls, simulating the movement of a horse. The claim is that this form of "horseback riding" works your core muscles and burns calories. But whether or not it was effective, it was certainly incredibly popular in Japan.

PLAY US OUT, NAMI

As the episode of Nekketsu Denpa Ningen Club comes to an end, the song playing in the background is "Main Character (Hitou)", Nami's aforementioned image song from the Zetsubou Song Collection.

KAORI MANABE'S JUST BETWEEN YOU AND ME

Kaori Manabe is a real person, and she really did have a blog called "Koko Dake no Hanashi" ("Just Between You and Me"). Manabe's blog was incredibly popular at its peak, getting over 100,000 views per day.

BRAND AWARENESS

Majiru's computer monitor is made by "SHAFT". That's the name of the company that animated Zetsubou-sensei, put there instead of the name of the actual home electronics company, SHARP.

OBLIGATIONS AND SOLDIERS

This title is a twist on Wheat and Soldiers, a novel by Japanese author Ashihei Hino. As a soldier himself, he often wrote about the human side of war.

I LOVE AI-CHAN I LOVE TOMO-CHAN

In October of 2005, a man climbed 100 meters up the Tokyo Tower, and then unfurled a banner that said "I really love Tomo-chan! ❤", apparently as a message to Japanese pop singer Tomomi Kahara. After the man came down, he was promptly arrested for trespassing.

Later that same year, a train operator for the Tokyo Metro caused a stir by shouting "I love Ai-chan!!!" over and over again from the operator's booth. People were so concerned about him that someone eventually pushed the emergency button while the train was stopped at Nishikasai Station. Staff rushed to the train but determined the man was fine, and he stayed on his shift. Apparently, the operator claimed he was just talking to himself, and didn't realize how loud he'd become.

WITHOUT THE WIDE, I HAVE NO MOTIVATION.

The Wide was a TV show hosted by Hitoshi Kusano. It was a "wide show," a news and talk show similar to The Today Show or Good Morning America. It ran for an impressive 15 years, but finally aired its last episode in September of 2007.

"TAKAMISAKARI'S ROBOCOP SHTICK!"

Takamisakari Seiken was a sumo wrestler whose career ran from 1999 to 2013. He had a pre-bout ritual where he would punch downwards repeatedly with both arms; it looked fairly robotic, and earned him the nickname "Robocop".

"LEAVING A COMMENT CARD FOR SHIRAI SHI-SAN AT THE CO-OP!"

This is referring to a man named Masanori Shiraishi. In 2004, he was a staff member of the co-op at the Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology. Part of his job was replying to comment cards from other union members - but he often replied with humor and wit, and posted the comment cards on his blog. This eventually became so popular that the comments were turned into a best-selling book. However, the downside of this popularity was that people started asking about literally anything, not just co-op related matters.

Most of the comment cards in the picture are unreadable, but there are two we can make out:

Comment: Lately, I've been tired no matter what I do... I'm so tired. From "Bad Person"

Response: Oh, you don't say. -Shiraishi

Comment: I want to see more anime starring Rie Kugimiya. There needs to be more! From "Sato"

Response: Please never leave your house again. -Shiraishi

"THE HANDKERCHIEF..."

In 2006, pitcher Yuuki Saito led his team to the summer Koshien championship, and the media nicknamed him the "Handkerchief Prince" for the way he wiped his brow on the pitching mound. Years later, he admitted that he didn't like the nickname at all.

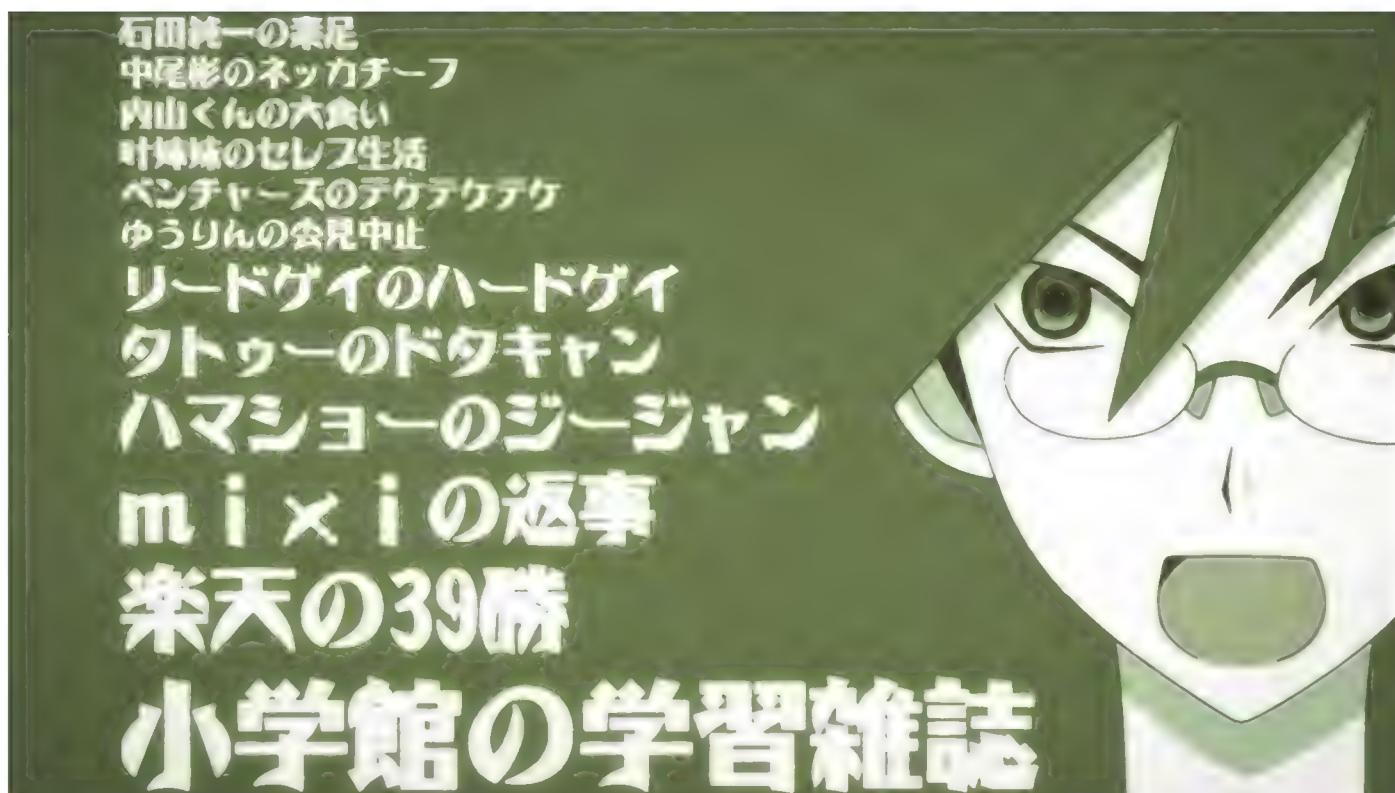
"DON'T COME OUT TO PLAY IN CASUAL WEAR, YO** HATA!"

The censored name is Yoku Hata. He's a stand-up comedian, and one of his most well-known gags was appearing as "The Guitar Samurai" - dressed in a yukata, he would (mis)quote and mock famous people while playing the guitar. However, after the novelty of the act eventually began to wane, he would sometimes appear on shows wearing regular clothes.

"WHERE'S THE SPREAD-LEG POSE?!"

The girl in the magazine is Yan Yingling, a Taiwanese swimsuit model/singer/professional wrestler/pinup girl who lived in Japan. She began her career with erotic photography, but Kagerou seems a bit disappointed with her recent efforts.

"ANYWAY, MANY THINGS ARE TURNED INTO OBLIGATIONS!"



Text scrolls up the screen behind Nozomu as he says this. The items in the list are all things that people see as obligatory:

- **Aki Hoshino showing cleavage:** Aki Hoshino is a bikini idol.
- **Katsura Sanshi falling:** Katsura Sanshi is a rakugo artist and former co-host of a show called Newlyweds Welcome! Newlyweds come on the show and talk about their lives together and how they met, and Katsura would often fall out of his chair in shock over their strange stories.
- **Jun'ichi Ishida wearing shoes without socks:** Jun'ichi Ishida is an actor who became famous for not wearing socks. He finally wore socks to a promotional event for the International Patisserie Grand Prix in 2009; it was the first time he had worn socks in public in 20 years.
- **Akira Nakao's neckerchiefs:** Akira Nakao is also an actor, and wherever he appears, he often has some sort of scarf wrapped tastefully around his neck.
- **Shinji Uchiyama eating a lot:** Shinji Uchiyama is another actor; anime fans might know him from his role as Gluttony in the live-action Fullmetal Alchemist movies. Suffice it to say, Shinji is a big guy.
- **The Kano Sisters' extravagant lifestyle:** Kyoko and Mika Kano are Japanese glitterati who are well-known for their outrageous clothes, expensive jewelry, and all-around flashy lifestyle.
- **The Ventures' glissandos:** The Ventures are an American instrumental rock band from the 1950s. Their first big hit, "Walk, Don't Run", was an international sensation; and when they toured Japan in 1962, they found instant fame there, which has lasted to this day. As for a "glissando", it's a musical term for sliding up (or down) a scale of notes without articulating each one. This technique is part of The Ventures' signature sound.

• **Yuurin cancelling press conferences:** This is actually meant to be Yuukorin, a nickname for pinup model Yuko Ogura. In the mid-to-late 2000s, she went through several messy relationships and breakups, so she would cancel press conferences on the spot if they asked any personal questions.

• Hard sex scenes between gay leads

• **Tatu canceling shows at the last minute:** In 2003, Russian pop duo t.A.T.u were scheduled to appear on TV Asahi's Music Station - and though they did show up at first, they left before performing and stood up the audience. Then they immediately cancelled a second scheduled appearance, citing a "difference of opinion between the artists and management."

• **Hamasho's denim jackets:** You might remember from episode 1 that there are two prominent people nicknamed "Hamasho". This is referring to Shougo Hamada, the singer. His number one trademark was wearing sunglasses, but wearing jean jackets - often the full Canadian tuxedo - wasn't far behind.

• **Mixi responses:** Mixi is a Japanese social networking service that launched in 2004. It was incredibly popular; by 2007, it had more than 10 million users.

• **Rakuten winning 39 games:** The Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles baseball team was formed in 2004... but it was a bit of a rocky start. In 2005, their first season, they won 38 games... out 136. It would take until 2009 for them to have a season where they won more games than they lost.

• **Shogakukan educational magazines:** The manga publisher Shogakukan used to print a series of "Educational Magazines" which were separated out by school year, and featured manga appropriate to that age level. (The "Education" part was learning to read via manga.) Most of them are discontinued now, though as of this writing, the "First Grade", "Kindergarten", and "Eighth Grade" magazines are still running.

• **Manga frontispieces featuring swimsuits:** Manga anthology magazines run several different series at once, meaning cover space is at a premium. But instead of putting manga characters on the cover, several anthologies use that space to preview the pinup models who appear in a handful of pages in the magazine.

• **The Asia Cup:** The AFC Asian Cup is a soccer tournament, where the winner is crowned the continental champion of Asia. Japan is the winningest team among all involved, with four championships under their belt (in 1992, 2000, 2004, and 2011).

• **Kikuko Inoue:** Kikuko Inoue is one of the most prolific voice actresses in anime history. She's here in Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei as the voice of Manami, and you have almost certainly heard her in other shows as well.

"IT'S INOUE KIKUKO, AGE 17!"

It's become a running gag in anime fandom that Kikuko Inoue is perpetually 17 years old. Whenever she's asked her age, she replies that she's 17, to which her fans dutifully respond, "Come on, now!" In truth, Kikuko was born in 1964.

PRESIDENT V. POTIN

This is a play on Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia. In early 2008, when this show aired, there were a lot of anxious eyes on Putin as his time in the presidency expired. The Russian Constitution prohibited Putin from holding the office for a third consecutive term, and people wondered if he would step down quietly. He did... technically. Right after the new president was elected, Putin was immediately appointed as the Prime Minister of Russia, which meant he retained all his political power. By 2012, Putin was back in office as president.

MIRAKURU 355 CREPES

There was a children's cooking anime called Miracle! Mimika that aired in 2006. If you remember the number wordplay of goroawase, the numbers 3-3-5 can be read as mi-mi-ka, making the name of this shop "Miracle Mimika".

TOKYO WINS THE ALL-JAPAN HIGH SCHOOL HOMECOMING CHAMPIONSHIP

This is based on a popular joke news story from 2006. It was a story like you might read in The Onion: an All-Japan High School Homecoming Championship was held, with high school students from all over Japan gathering in Saitama Stadium to see who could go home the fastest. Many of the "athletes" ran into problems - one loitered around a convenience store eating rice balls, another one got distracted by an arcade, another one was disqualified for stealing a bicycle - but the winner, Taro Sato from Saitama, made it home in 1 hour, 2 minutes, and 42 seconds.

"SUCH EGO-DRIVEN OBLIGATIONS!"

A huge list scrolls up the screen behind Nozomu here:

- **Hibi's Outfits when he Returns to Japan:** This is meant to be "Hide", as in Hidetoshi Nakata, one of Japan's most successful soccer players. He has a huge interest in fashion and often wears designer clothing, making a splash with fans and the press whenever he returns to his home country. (But since he's on this list, Nozomu seems to think he only wears designer clothes out of obligation.)
- **The Wig Boxer:** Masayuki Koguchi was a relatively unknown boxer, until December 13, 2005. That day, during a fight against Daichi Shibata, the wig that Masayuki had been secretly wearing started to slip off. Eventually his cornerman just took it off before round 5, which made the audience roar with laughter. But this momentary embarrassment became Masayuki's ticket to fame. He suddenly found himself flooded with requests for TV appearances and hair growth product endorsements. After that, Koguchi never wore a wig into the ring again (it was technically against the rules), but he would wear wigs as part of his ring walk, and then throw them into the crowd before the fight started.
- **"1, 2, 3, Unbelievable!"**: In 2003, American coach Trey Hillman took over as manager for the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters. He couldn't speak much Japanese, but he always tried to speak a few broken sentences for the sake of players and fans. When his team won the pennant in 2006, he shouted "Shinjirarenai!" ("Unbelievable!") in a very thick accent, and the fans loved it so much that it became a catchphrase for the rest of his career.
- **Ro*d After Chapter 3**: The censored word is "Road", a song series written by Japanese rock band THE TRA-BRYU in 1993. Road was originally meant to be one song, but it was over an hour long. That meant that it wouldn't fit on an 8cm CD, the most popular format for single releases at the time. So it was split into 13 parts, and released in chapters over the next eight years.

• **Sachiko Kobayashi's Kouhaku Outfits:** Sachiko Kobayashi is an enka singer who has been performing since 1963, when she was nine years old. She's been on the New Year's music show Kouhaku Uta Gassen more than 30 times, and she almost always appears in wild, over-the-top costumes. One year, she wore a dress made of silver tinsel with a giant bird on her head as a hat. Another year, she started out in a deep red cloak covered in flowers, and changed, mid-song, into a feathery purple dress that had a giant, whirling, purple-and-silver mechanism rotating behind her head.

• **Taro Kimura's Puns:** Taro Kimura is a television journalist who was once part of a news show called FNN NEWS COM. He was famous for always wrapping things up with a groan-worthy pun.

• **Hiroshima Carps Player Saito's Handkerchief (Red):** We've already covered Yuuki Saito (斎藤 佑樹), the high-school baseball player whom the media nicknamed the "Handkerchief Prince". But there was another Yuuki Saito (齊藤 悠葵), a professional player for the Hiroshima Toyo Carp. The sports media nicknamed him the "Red Handkerchief Prince" (the Carp jerseys are red), and he made a play of wiping his forehead with a red handkerchief during interviews.

• **Caps on Plastic Bottles:** Plastic bottle caps in Japan often have fancy logos or designs on them, even though they're just meant to be thrown away.

• **Sealed Pages in Magazines:** Generally speaking, magazines that are low on content will throw in some sealed pinup pages to help entice people to buy them.

• **Japa*et's Freebies:** Japanet Takata is a home shopping network that claims to offer customers fantastic prices... but they also throw in so many extras (for example, buying a rice cooker and getting a frying pan for "free") that the prices tend to be higher than if you bought the item on its own.

• **Mos Burger Explaining Where Your Food Came From (With Photos):** Mos Burger is a fast food hamburger chain in Japan, similar to McDonalds. Even though it's not exactly gourmet food, they still run information campaigns showing the farms where their vegetables are grown.

• **Cell Phones Getting Smaller:** In the age before smart phones, a cell phone's technological prowess was partially measured by how small it could be. Moving away from the bulky portable phones of the 90's to small handheld phones was good, but they started to get so small that they were easy to lose or break.

• **"World Police":** The United States military is, by far, the largest in the world. After the deadly terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the US invaded Iraq and became directly involved in Middle Eastern affairs; then-President George W. Bush proclaimed that "Iraqi democracy will succeed - and that success will send forth the news, from Damascus to Tehran - that freedom can be the future of every nation." Prevailing sentiment in the 2000s was that the US, with all its military might, had an obligation to prevent violence around the world.

• **Koizumi Surprise:** Former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi won his election by promising that he would change his corrupt political party (the Liberal Democratic Party), and if they wouldn't change, he would destroy it instead. As one of his first big shake-ups, Koizumi asked Takeo Hiranuma, the Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, to take up a senior post in the LDP - and he did so without first seeking permission from Hiranuma's faction leaders. It was a surprise to everyone involved, especially the faction bosses. Hiranuma was forbidden from accepting the senior post, but he did stay on at the ministry.

"DVDS RECOMMENDED BY OTHER PEOPLE."



The DVDs falling down from the sky are Japanese releases of *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei*. Nozomu won't even watch his own show?

HANDBELL CONCERT



Nozomu's ticket is "No.326". This is a reference to the artist known as 326. His real name is Mitsuru Nakamura, but if you remember your goroawase, "Mi-tsu-ru" can be written using the numbers 3-2-6, which is how the artist refers to himself. According to the ticket, the concert is being held at 7PM on December 17th in Yotsuya-ku, a ward that hasn't existed since 1947 (that year, it was merged with Ushigome and Yodobashi to form the modern ward of Shinjuku).

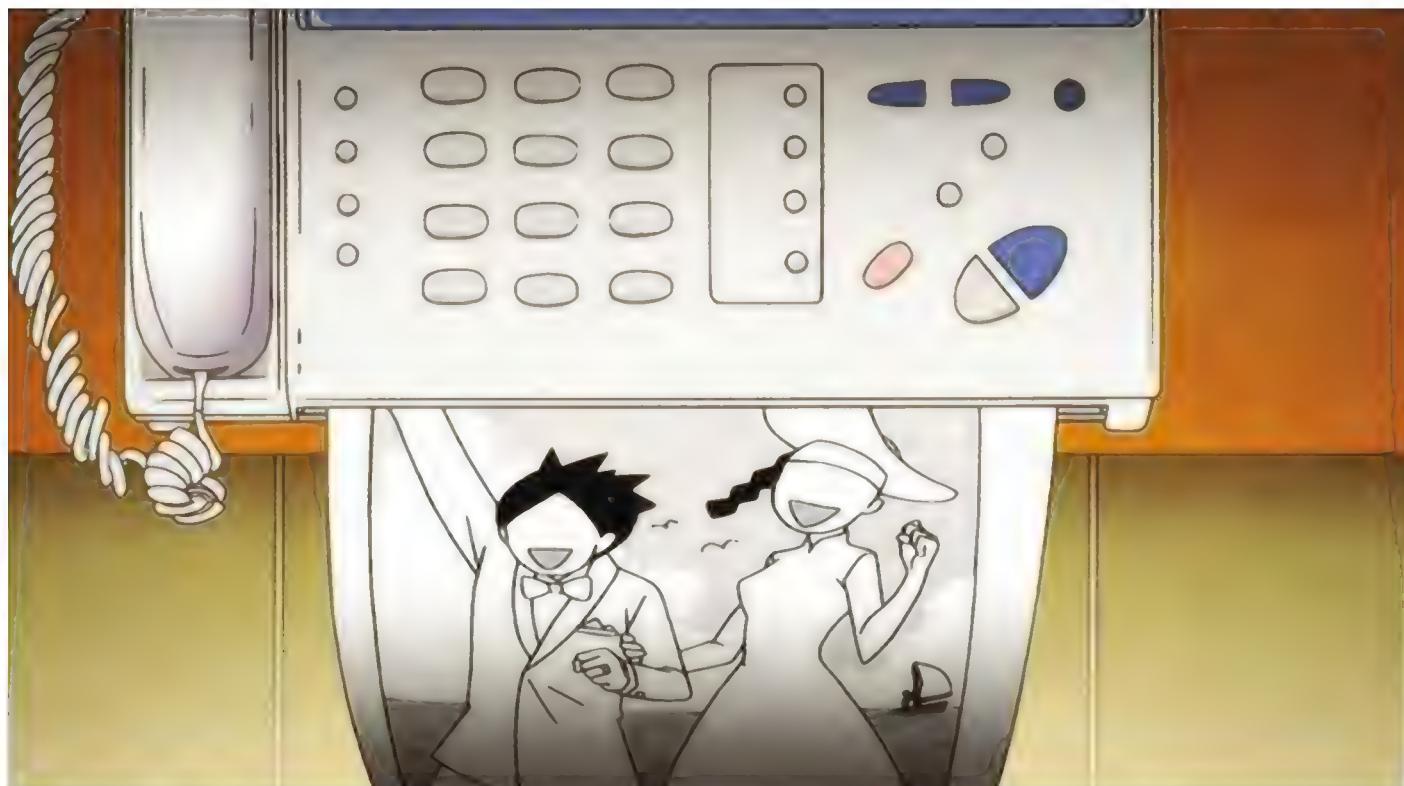
"SHE'S DONE ALL THE COOKING FOR US EVER SINCE WE STARTED LIVING HERE."

If you recall, at the end of *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei* season 1, Nozomu's house was blown up. Apparently he's been living in the Night Duty Room ever since.

"HE'S TURNING INTO A NO-HOPER, KOMORI-CHAN!"

The word Maria uses for "no-hoper" in Japanese is *damenzu* (だめんず); it's a combination of the Japanese words for "bad" (dame) and "men" (menzu). The slang word got its start in Mayumi Kurata's popular essay series *Damens Walker*.

"ANNOUNCING YOUR MARRIAGE VIA A SINGLE FAX PAGE!"



The picture in the fax machine is a spoof on a real wedding photo of vocal artists TM Revolution and Yumi Yoshimura (of Puffy AmiYumi fame). They were married in 1999, and divorced in 2002.

"ANNOUNCING YOUR RETIREMENT ON YOUR HOMEPAGE!"

As Nozomu says this, we're shown a picture of a blog titled "Hde's Mail", with an entry that says "Setting off on a new journey." This is a reference to Hidetoshi Nakata, the famous soccer player who's been mentioned in previous liner notes. After Japan lost to Brazil in the 2006 World Cup finals, Hidetoshi shocked the world by announcing on his blog that he was retiring from soccer at the age of 29. "I will never go out on the pitch again as a professional football player," he said, "but I will never give up football."

"BREAKING UP VIA A SINGLE TEXT!"

The text in question is from "Ebizou" to "Sato". The people in question here are kabuki actor Ichikawa Ebizou (real name Takatoshi Horikoshi), and actress Sato Eriko. They were a couple for three months in 2007, but Ebizou broke things off rather quickly and jumped straight into a relationship with another actress, Takaoka Saki.

"BEING DEMOTED VIA ONE SHEET OF OFFICE PAPER!"

That poor man is being sent off to Hinamizawa, a fictional village in the murder mystery series Higurashi When They Cry. A lot of bad things happen in that town, so let's hope he gets transferred again soon.

"IT'S THE HIDDEN BLADE OF CONVERSATION!"

The Hidden Blade is a 2004 samurai movie from director Yoji Yamada. Within the film itself, the "hidden blade" is a technique that involves taking someone by surprise, and quickly stabbing them through the heart with a small, thin blade. The victim dies almost immediately, and the wound leaves no trace of blood.

VOICE ACTRESS >>> MASTER

This is from a story that Ryouko Shintani (the voice of Nami) told on the radio show Sayonara Zetsubou Housou. Apparently, when Kouji Kumeta won the Kodansha Manga Award for Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei, his former assistant, Kenjiro Hata, was too busy with Hayate the Combat Butler to attend the ceremony, or even to send a note of congratulations. However, both Ryouko and Marina Inoue (the voice of Chiri) told Kenjiro that he should at least try to visit Kouji Kumeta on his birthday in September. So eventually, Kenjiro sent a message to Kouji saying the two should meet up.

Kouji, meanwhile, wondered why Kenjiro was sending him a message out of the blue. When he found out that Kenjiro was only asking to see him because Ryouko and Marina told him he should, he felt utterly dejected, and sent Ryouko Shintani an email with the subject line: Voice Actress >>> Master. (In other words, a voice actress holds much more sway over someone than their old teacher does.)

BUTT-DIGGING BUG

In 2007, husband/wife duo Uruma Delvi wrote a children's song called Oshiri Kajiri Mushi ("Butt-biting Bug"). It was a goofy little song about a bug who liked to bite people in the rear end, and it ended up being so popular that it was even turned into an anime.

Meanwhile, the Internet being what it is, "Butt-biting Bug" was quickly memed into "Butt-digging Bug". I will leave the details of this particular meme to your imagination.

GO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ASOU FAMILY

Tarou Asou, a politician with the Liberal Democratic Party, is part of a pretty elite family. His grandfather was once Prime Minister of Japan, and held the seat for longer than almost anyone. His sister is a literal princess, the widow of Prince Tomohito of Mikasa. Even his wife is the daughter of former Prime Minister Zenkou Suzuki. Thus, running off to become a part of the Asou family might not be a bad idea.

BELLYBUTTON LINT SESAMIN

In Japanese, the word for "bellybutton lint" is "heso no goma". However, the word "goma" can also mean "sesame seeds". And sesamin is a polyphenol found in sesame seeds, which some people take as a supplement to reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease.

So, there you have it. Sesamin, not from sesame seeds (goma), but from your bellybutton lint (heso no goma). Pretty sure 0 out of 10 doctors would recommend it.

"WE HAVE TO TAKE THE NUMBER OF DAYS INOUE-SAN SAYS IN HER SKIT AND CHANGE IT FOR THE TV AND DVD VERSIONS."

As Nozomu is saying this, there's text up on the blackboard that says:

Sorry m(_ _)m
Grownup stuff happened, and we weren't able to change it
~Producer Kamada~

These two things are both connected. If you recall, for Kikuko Inoue's earlier appearance in a radio skit, they calculated the exact number of days between this episode's TV air date and her 17th birthday. Apparently they were also planning to calculate the exact number of days between the DVD release date for this episode and her 17th birthday... But production problems got in the way, and they weren't able to get Kikuko back into the studio to re-record the line for the DVD version.

"THEY ALL CASUALLY DROP BOMBSHELLS!"



Text flies frantically across the screen as Nozomu says this. Here's a list of what's flashing by:

- **Images may differ from the actual product:** The cheeseburger in a McDonald's commercial never really looks like the cheeseburger you get in the restaurant, does it?
- **Individual results may vary:** Don't hold your breath about that expensive new diet pill.
- **For showtimes, contact your local theater:** Back in 2008, only large movie theater chains like Toho and AEON (formerly Warner Mycal) had widely distributed showtimes. If you wanted to know showtimes for your local mom and pop theater, you had to contact them directly.
- **The characters in this game are 18 years old:** There are plenty of games and anime where the girls are said to be 18, but they sure don't look like it.

• **Excessive smoking can be harmful to your health:** After drawing you in with flashy advertisements and fancy packaging, cigarette cartons casually have a little warning on them telling you smoking causes lung cancer.

• **The 118% is because some people received offers from more than one company:** Yoyogi Animation Academy used to run ads claiming a graduate employment rate of over 100%. This incredible feat was accomplished by double-counting people who passed more than one employment exam.

• **Female “students”:** Related to the “18 years old” comment above, adult games and shows will often deliberately avoid mentioning that a girl is in high school, and just call her a “student” to keep it ambiguous.

• **Extra fees and charges may be applied:** Cell phone companies are always vying to offer the lowest prices to customers, but they make up for it with hidden fees and surcharges.

• **My real age is 2*:** In March 2007, pin-up model Jun Natsukawa - who had always claimed she was born in 1983 - admitted that she was actually born in 1980.

• **“0.1% Alcohol” written on non-alcoholic beer:** Many non-alcoholic beers still do contain a small amount of alcohol. In Japan, drinks with less than 1% alcoholic content aren’t categorized as liquors (though minors still aren’t allowed to drink them).

THIN STATIONMASTER

LCD TVs were all the rage in the late 2000s. Their two biggest selling points were that they were thin, and they had liquid crystal displays. The joke here is that the Japanese word for “liquid crystal” is ekishou (えきしよう), which is just one tiny letter change away from ekijou (えきじょう), which means “stationmaster”.

AN OFF-THE-AIR VICTORY

In October 2007, the Yomiuri Giants played against the Yakult Swallows for the Central League championship. However, the Giants had been in a slump for a while, so for the first time ever, Nippon TV (the broadcasting network that would normally air Giants games) declined to show the game.

Problem is, the Giants won.

As the players lifted their manager into the air in celebration, the network scrambled to swap over to footage of the stadium. In the end, the best they could manage was to preempt their scheduled programming with a 10-minute highlight reel from the game.

ABE-SAN, WE'RE SORRY

It's probably obvious by now, but this show makes plenty of jokes involving Shinzou Abe, the former Prime Minister of Japan. This is the staff's way of apologizing. (Though they'll still continue to do it.)

THE ONE I LOVE IS IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE

This last bit of Lupin text is a reference to the 1995 Studio Ghibli movie Whisper of the Heart. In Japan, the slogan for the movie was "There's someone I love" (Suki na hito ga dekimashita)... But here, it says, "The one I love is in love with someone else" (Suki na hito ga suki na hito ga dekimashita). This is likely connected to a comment that Assistant Director Naoyuki Tatsuwa made in the February 2008 issue of Animage, in an piece about "Zetsubou Experiences in 2007". His answer was, "The girl I loved had a boyfriend."

"DON'T DROP A BOMBSHELL LIKE THAT ON ME!" REBUFFED MELOS AS HE GOT TO HIS FEET

This title is another play on Osamu Dazai's short story, "Run, Melos!" Hypothetically speaking, this is probably what Melos would have said after being told that if he didn't come back in time, he'd receive a full pardon.

BOTCHAN

The preview for episode 4 is based on a novel named Botchan, by Natsume Souseki. The real title is written 坊っちゃん, which means "Young Master"; but here in the next-episode preview, the kanji for "bo" is changed to 没, which means "death". In the original novel, the main character Botchan is reckless and mischievous; but here, his childhood adventures all seem to have a morbid bent.

EPISODE 4

MAKE A WISH

As the episode begins, we see Chiri and Kafuka all dressed up for the Tanabata Festival. Tanabata is a Japanese celebration based around the story of Orihime and Hikoboshi, two deities separated by the Milky Way. But it's said that once a year, on the seventh day of the seventh month, the two are allowed to meet.



To celebrate Tanabata, people write heartfelt wishes on colorful strips of paper, and hang them from stalks of bamboo. We can see a bunch of them behind Chiri and Kafuka in the opening shot. However, since this is Zetsubou-sensei, you can be sure that they aren't just normal wishes. Here's what people have written:

- **Be Beautiful:** The way this is written in Japanese ("utsukushiku are") makes it a clear reference to Be Noble, Be Strong, Be Beautiful: Japan's Revival Begins with Amending the Constitution, a book by Yoshiko Sakurai. You might remember her from her many cameo appearances in Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei season 1, usually on posters with "Blow up the oil fields" written on them.

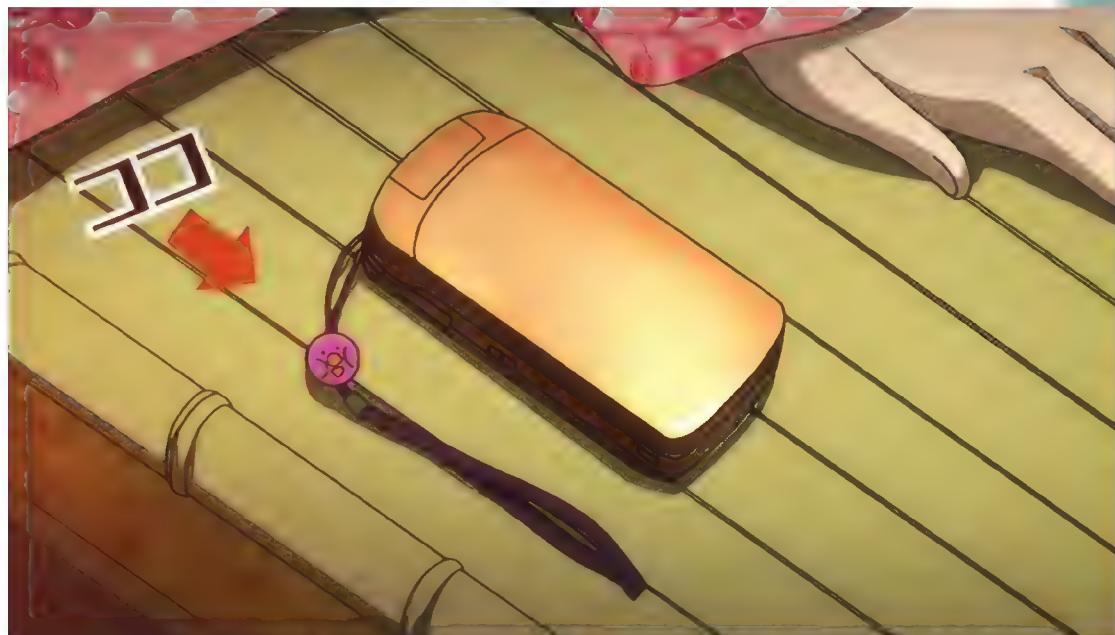
- **Conquer Mankind -Giga Zombie:** Giga Zombie is a villain from the film Doraemon: Nobita and the Birth of Japan. Though it seems like Giga Zombie has mystical powers, in truth, he's just an ordinary man. He travelled back in time to strike fear into prehistoric humans, with the hopes of changing history to make himself king.

• **I want to be happy** -Ex-Koala: "Koala" here is actually referring to a Japanese comedian named Shinya Miyatani. Koala was his stage name. But in 2004, on the advice of a fortune teller, he changed his name to "Happy Happy".

• **I'd like some iron** -Chin*** Man: The 2008 Summer Olympics were set to be held in Beijing, China, which meant that leading up to the games, there was a lot of construction going on there: new stadiums, hotels, train lines, etc. The demand for iron was exceptionally high. It even led to a spate of bizarre metal robberies in Japan - graveyard incense holders, copper construction wire, even playground slides were stolen, and then presumably sold in China. (And just in case it wasn't obvious, the censored name of the wish-writer is "Chinese Man".)

• **Please don't let anything else happen** -Tsunku♂: Tsunku♂ (yes, the male symbol is part of his name) is the lead producer for several popular Hello! Project pop acts, including girl band Morning Musume. The mid-2000s were a tough time for him: Ai Kago got caught smoking at age 15, Nozomi Tsuji got pregnant (which meant she could no longer tour or perform), and Miki Fujimoto resigned after getting caught up in a dating scandal. So it seems only natural that Tsunku♂ would wish for smooth sailing in the year to come.

**"YOUR CELL PHONE STRAP IS RATHER
FETCHING, KITSU-SAN."**



Her cell phone strap is a purple version of Anpanman, a popular anime character for kids. "Fetching" is an odd way to describe it.

**"LIKE FIXATING ON THE TEAM SPONSOR'S
NAME MORE THAN THE SOCCER MATCH!"**

The jersey Nozomu's looking at says "Binbo", but it's meant to be "Bimbo", the name of an actual baked goods company in Mexico. It's a large company which has sponsored several soccer teams in Mexico, Costa Rica, and even the US. In fact, when Bimbo first sponsored the Philadelphia Union in 2011, it caused a bit of a stir among sports reporters, since they weren't sure how female fans would respond to jerseys with the word "BIMBO" emblazoned across the chest. But it went over well enough and, as of this writing, the sponsorship is still in effect.

"OR WORRYING MORE ABOUT WHERE **MUTAKU'S MUSTACHE IS IN A MOVIE!"

The censored name is "Kimutaku", short for Takuya Kimura. He rose to fame as a member of the popular boy band SMAP, and has since moved on to become a prolific TV and movie actor.

Speaking of which, the movie that Nozomu's complaining about is the 2006 film *Love and Honor*. In it, Takuya played a mustachioed samurai named Mimura Shinnojo.

"OR FIXATING ON A SUSPECT'S NAME MORE THAN WHAT THEY'RE ACCUSED OF!"

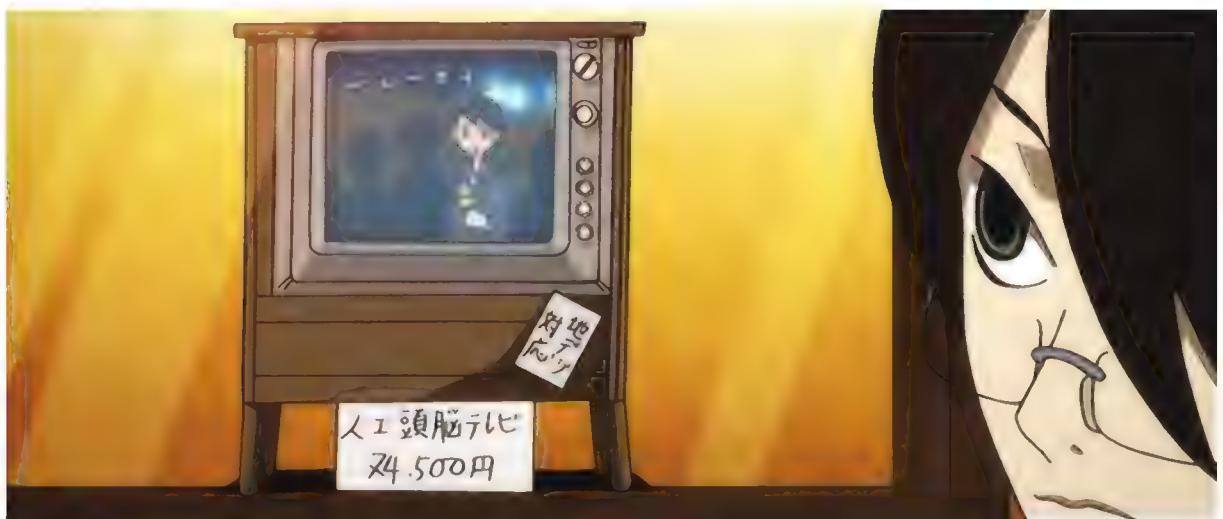
To understand this joke, it takes a bit of knowledge about how kanji work.

Any given kanji can be read multiple different ways. For example, this kanji which means "tree" (木) can be pronounced "ki", "gi", "ko", "de", "boku", or "moku" depending on how it's being used. This aspect of kanji makes reading names in Japanese rather difficult, especially if it's a unique name that you don't see very often.

So when Nozomu is staring at the suspect's name (大木 宇宙太), he can't figure out how it's supposed to be pronounced. He's trying to read the first name (宇宙太), which should be "Uchuuta"... but that's a very uncommon name, so Nozomu's best guess is "Sorata", which is another valid way to read those kanji.

And just how do we know that the name should be read as "Uchuuta"? Because in 2003, a man named Uchuuta Suzuki was arrested in Saitama prefecture on multiple counts of groping girls and women. His name is written 鈴木 宇宙太, just one kanji different from the report on Nozomu's television.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TV 74,500 YEN



The TV for sale in the store window is based on an actual television. It's a Saga series TV, manufactured by Panasonic in 1965. They really did market it as an "Artificial Intelligence TV", since it used variable capacitance diodes in its tuning system.

By the way, "Terrestrial Broadcast Capable" simply means that it can pick up radio wave signals from TV station transmitters. In the US, it was more commonly known as "analog" television. However, that type of broadcast signal is no longer used here; in 2009, the FCC required all TV stations to move to digital transmissions. Japan followed suit not long after, and completely swapped to all-digital by 2012.

I KNOW I'M HAPPY

Even though the poster text in the kitchen is partially obscured, we can see enough to know that it's "I Know I'm Happy", a song by Saeko Shuu. It aired back in 1993 on the NHK music show *Minna no Uta* ("Everyone's Song"). The lyrics are about a mother who realizes that, even though raising children can be hard, it has filled her heart with love. She knows that she's happy. This song was incredibly popular with mothers and housewives across the country, and has since become a staple at weddings.

"THERE WAS A DEATH IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD RECENTLY."



When we see the dead man's picture at the funeral, it's a portrait of Argentinian revolutionary Che Guevara. Specifically, it's the stylized image of Che's face that was created by an Irish artist named Jim Fitzpatrick, which has since been printed on t-shirts, posters, banners, hats, and more. It's doubtful that a Marxist guerrilla fighter would have liked being turned into a fashion logo to be bought and sold, but that's what happened.

"ANYWAY, PEOPLE CAN'T HELP BUT BE DISTRACTED BY THINGS OTHER THAN THE TOPIC AT HAND!"

And it's our first giant list of episode 4! Here are the items zooming across the screen in front of Nozomu:

- **A suspect's crime overshadowed by his obvious wig:** Hidetsugu Aneha was an architect who was arrested in 2006 for designing hundreds of buildings using falsified earthquake safety data to save on material costs. But the safety data wasn't the only thing that was fake. When people saw his pictures in the media, discussion went straight to the fact his hair looked like a wig - and eventually it was revealed that Hidetsugu actually was bald.

- **Caring less about a female astronaut, and more about her husband with the mustache:** Chiaki Mukai is a (now retired) astronaut with JAXA, the Japanese equivalent of NASA. She's also a physician, and has held positions like Assistant Professor in the Department of Cardiovascular Surgery at Keio University, and Vice President of the Tokyo University of Science. Basically, she's

a very interesting person with a lot of life experience under her belt. But for whatever reason, her husband Makio Mukai, an affable medical scientist with a bob haircut and mustache, has captured more of the public's attention.

• **E**zou's crazy life is more interesting than his kabuki:** This is referring to kabuki actor Ichikawa Ebizou. There's a joke at play here... Most people know about kabuki, the classical form of Japanese theater. But there's a similar Japanese word, "kabukimono", which means "strange" or "crazy". So the pun here is that Ebizou's kabukimono life is more interesting than his kabuki.

• **Caring more about the anime OP's chart ranking than the anime itself:** Many songs used as anime openings show up on the Oricon Singles charts, Japan's music popularity ranking service.

• **Baseball eclipsed by handkerchiefs:** This is another reference to Yuuki Saito, the Handkerchief Prince.

• **Golf eclipsed by shyness:** Yuuki Saito isn't the only "Prince". Ryo Ishikawa, a professional golfer, won the Munsingwear Open KSB Cup at the age of 15. Because of his young age and boyish good looks, the mass media dubbed him The Bashful Prince.

• **Caring more about the expert who only shows up after disasters rather than the disaster itself:** Whenever something tragic happens, such as a train crash or a military accident, it's a common occurrence on Japanese television to bring in "experts" to talk about the incident. However, their true function is usually to be a strong personality that will inspire people to keep watching.

• **Paying more attention to Be**ham's high-pitched voice than his face:** David Beckham is a famous soccer player from the UK. He was the first English player to win league titles in four different countries; some consider him a global ambassador for the sport. As such, millions of people around the world have had a chance to hear his voice, which some consider to be strangely high for a man of his build.

• **Distracted from the movie's plot by the price of gas at Y**** ****ra's gas station:** The censored name is the actor "Yuuya Yagira", and the movie is Sugar and Spice. In the film, Yuuya Yagira's character Shiro works at a gas station. The price of gasoline in the movie was listed as 125 yen per liter - but when this film released, Japan (along with rest of the world) was seeing a spike in gas prices due to tensions in the Middle East. The actual price at the pump kept setting new all-time high records, going up to 144 yen per liter in August of 2006.

• **Can't concentrate on the homemade bento she made for me because of the newspaper it's wrapped in:** This isn't tied to anything specific. It's a hypothetical situation where a cute girl has made a homemade lunch for someone, but the newspaper she wrapped it in is something troubling, like the newsletter for a cult or flyers from an extreme political party.

• **Caring more about beating Japan than about how you're viewed by the rest of the world:** Japan and South Korea have had a strained relationship for a very long time. The history of the two countries is long and complicated, but current-day tensions mostly stem from disputes about Japan's actions during World War II. In 2014, the results of a BBC World Service poll showed that 37% of Japanese people viewed South Korea negatively, and a staggering 79% of South Koreans viewed Japan negatively. This tension has bled over into everything from politics to tourism to sporting events.

• **Watching Johnny's more than the volleyball:** The FIVB Volleyball Men's World Cup is held every four years. It's a big event featuring players from all over the



world, and since 1977, it has always been hosted in Japan. “Johnny’s”, meanwhile, refers to Johnny & Associates, a Japanese talent agency with huge pull in the Japanese entertainment industry. Several big-name bands represented by Johnny’s have made their debut performing at the Volleyball World Cup, including V6 (in 1995), Arashi (in 1999), NEWS (in 2003), and Hey! Say! JUMP (in 2007). It’s no stretch to say that many fans in the audience are there for the music more than the volleyball.

• **A female guest at a wedding focusing on the groom more than the ceremony:** Again, this isn’t anything specific. It’s a hypothetical situation where someone in the crowd isn’t thinking about well-wishes for the couple... Instead, she’s thinking, “He should have married me!”

ROADSIDE ARTIST

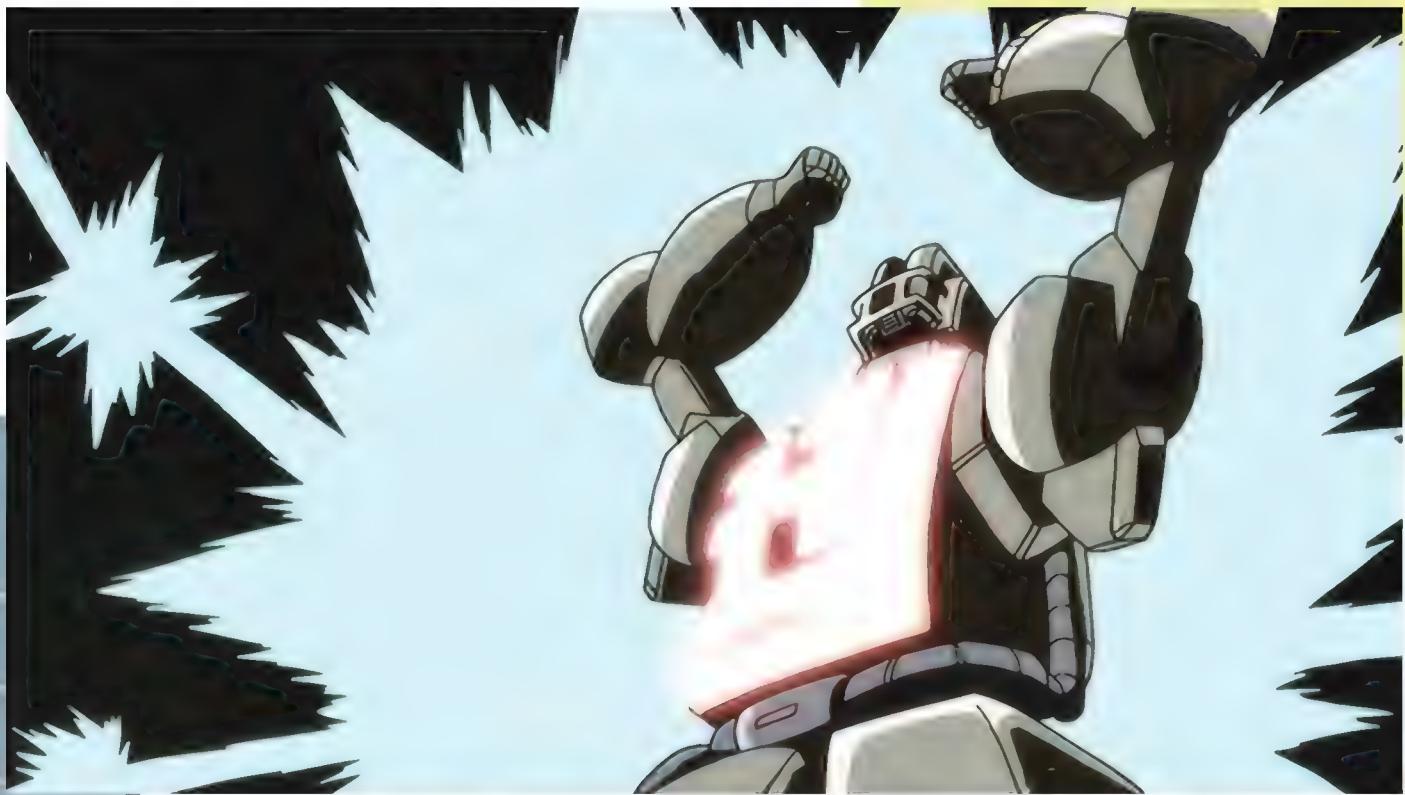
This title is a play on Roadside Stone, a serialized novel by the author and playwright Yuuzou Yamamoto. He started it in 1937, but ultimately it was never finished.

A FAMILIAR SHIP



When the El Niñoans arrive to conquer Earth, they descend from the sky in a black sphere with a giant eye on the front. This design is a nod to the Eye of Volger from Mitsuteru Yokoyama’s much-beloved manga/anime series *Giant Robo*. But that’s not the only homage built into this ship! It also has two downward-facing thrusters in the back, just like a Ball from *Mobile Suit Gundam*. What’s more, the control room is modeled after the cockpit of King Joe, a giant robot from the third Ultraman series, *Ultraseven*. King Joe was built by a race called the Alien Pedan, and not-so-coincidentally, at the start of *Ultraseven*, the Alien Pedan are only shown in silhouette.

ROBOT FROM THE SKY



A door on the bottom of the spherical ship opens up, and a giant robot plunges to the ground. It then stands up, and raises its arms in a flexing motion, as electricity sparks all around it. This is an iconic pose struck by the robot from *Tetsujin 28*, another one of Mitsuteru Yokoyama's famous works.

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE

Fighter jets rush in to intercept the robot threat, and from the look of the wings, they seem to be American F-22 Raptors. What makes this a bit odd is that the US military banned sales of the F-22 Raptor; they couldn't be sold to any other country. Japan had made inquiries, and in 2007, there were hints that the ban might be lifted. But as of this writing, that specific fighter jet is still exclusive to the US.

"OH! YOU'RE MY OLD FRIEND, UH..."



When Nozomu greets his old friend, they're both in silhouette in front of a shimmering background. This is a spoof on a scene from the final episode of *Ultraseven*, where the hero Dan Moroboshi confesses to fellow Ultra Guard member Anne Yuri that he is, in fact, Ultraseven.

FOLKTALES OF GREATER JAPAN

Nozomu's friend holds up a book called Folktales of Greater Japan, or Dai Nippon Mukashi Banashi in Japanese. This is a play on the title of a 1975 TV show called Manga Nippon Mukashi Banashi, which was a series of 10-minute retellings of Japanese folk tales like "Momotaro" or "The Story of Princess Kaguya".

BATTING 1000

Harumi is practicing baseball at a place called the "Ozzie Batting Center". This is most likely a reference to Ozzie Smith, an American baseball player who played for the San Diego Padres, and later the St. Louis Cardinals. Though he was a great shortstop (he won the National League Gold Glove Award 13 seasons in a row), batting was not his strong suit. His career average, across 18 years, was .262.

"YOU'VE GOT TALENT, KID. CARE TO JOIN MY TEAM?"



The man who approaches Harumi is wearing a "Grasons" uniform, number 99. This is surely meant to be "Dragons", as in the Chunichi Dragons, and jersey #99 makes him Norihiro Nakamura. Nakamura was only with the Dragons for one year - from 2007 to 2008 - but in that time, the Dragons won the 2007 Japan Series, and Nakamura was named series MVP.

RISE OF THE ROBOTS



When the El Niñoans send out their army of mecha, we can see that they all have a bird-like mark on their left shoulders. It's very close to the mark of the Grados Empire from Sunrise's 1985 mecha show Blue Comet SPT Layzner. In fact, the beefy robot with a claw for a left hand is specifically a spoof on one of the Gradosian robots, the Gashlan.

"IS THIS REALLY AN ULTIMATE WEAPON?"



After a bit of digging, Nami finds a stone mask buried in the ground. Visually, it has the eyes and overall face shape of the hero's mask from Ultraseven, but the lush lips, vampire teeth, and forehead ridge are a callback to the magical stone masks in JoJo's Bizarre Adventure.

"VACUUM DEPOSITION!"

In the 1980s tokusatsu series Space Sheriff Gavan, the hero Gavan yells "Vacuum Deposition!" (jouchaku) to summon his metallic combat suit. (In real life, vacuum deposition is a method of applying coating to different materials, such as the mirror coating on a telescope lens.)

"TH-THIS IS THE POWER OF IDE?"

Nozomu's friend sputters out this line, which is from the 1980 anime series Space Runaway Ideon. In the series, archaeologists working on a planet called Solo discover three tanks that can combine into an incredible mecha called the Ideon. The Ideon is powered by a mysterious force called "Ide", which turns out to be much stronger than the humans realize.

"THIS IS PRETTY CRAZY, BUT THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS IS TO TAKE OUT THE BAD GUYS!"

The entire sequence that follows here is a spoof on the 1997 movie The End of Evangelion. Chiri jumps down a robot's throat, puts another one in a choke-hold, cuts up another one with a giant knife... These are all moves that Asuka Langley Soryu pulls off in the Evangelion Unit-02 in The End of Evangelion. The Unit-02 also has a "Progressive Knife" that looks like a segmented utility blade, which is what Chiri's using. Then Chiri starts counting her kills in German ("Erste! Zweite! Dritte!"), since Asuka's heritage is half-German. And as the cherry on top, when the robots are defeated, they make cross-shaped explosions, just like in Evangelion.

"WESTERN PANTIES UNDER JAPANESE CLOTHING? HOW TACKY!"

Until relatively recently, women didn't wear western-style underwear under their kimono. The traditional undergarment was a koshimaki, a strip of fabric that was something like a cross between a loincloth and a slip. However, in the late 1930s, loose pants called monpe became fashionable among women, which meant that koshimaki had to go. Western-style panties took their place, and ever since then, most women have swapped to that style of underwear no matter what they're wearing - even kimono.

"ERUPTING GOLD FINGER!"

Chiri's right hand begins to glow, and she shouts out "Erupting Gold Finger!" as she grabs an enemy robot's face and blows up its head. This whole sequence is an homage to the 1994 anime series Mobile Fighter G Gundam. In that show, Domon Kasshu, the hot-headed pilot of the God Gundam, has a move called the Erupting God Finger. Power is concentrated in the Gundam's palm, which Domon then uses to destroy the enemy's head, since any suit whose head is destroyed is instantly disqualified from battle.

1,000 ENEMIES DESTROYED

When this text appears on screen, it's a play on the Dynasty Warrior video game series. Those games are famous for throwing hundreds of enemies at you at once, and flashing up notifications every time you defeat 100... 200... 300... etc.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK? I AM A TRUE WARRIOR OF THE THREE KINGDOMS!"



And here we have Mobile Fighter G Gundam and Dynasty Warrior references mixed together. The line she's saying is from Dynasty Warriors; it's said once you've beaten 1,000 enemies. Meanwhile, her pose as she points to the sky while standing on the remains of defeated robots is a shot from G Gundam. It's the victory pose for the winner of the Gundam Fight, the one who will be crowned with the title "Gundam of Gundams".

A RAY OF HOPE

Once Chiri notices the El Niñoans, she brings her arms together and fires an energy ray that destroys their ship. Although her stance is a little different, it's clear she's using the Ultra Beam from the Ultraman series. Every iteration of Ultraman has the ability to fire a beam of energy, usually from their linked arms.

STRIKE A POSE



Now Chiri, still a giant, is standing with her arms crossed. When it comes to anime, this particular intimidating stance is known among Japanese fans as the Gainax Pose, for how often it has appeared in works by the studio. The English-speaking fandom often calls it the Gunbuster Pose, named after its dramatic appearance in episode 4 of the Gunbuster OVA.

WE RELOCATED TO SANNO MIYA CENTER-GAI IN 1976...

This next set of Lupin-style text is the actual story of how the Japanese bookstore chain Junkudo got its name. (And if you recall, this store is where Nozomu's book-loving student Kudou Jun gets his name from, as well.)

ORIGINAL STORIES

Right after the title card, we're shown a shelf full of books. The titles of these books ("Decorations at Tiffany's", "Obligations and Soldiers", etc.) are all episodes titles from Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei.

RAINY DAYS

Keep an eye on the books that Kudou reads throughout this story. Starting with "Rainy Days", he's reading through (a spoof of) a children's book series called Arashi no Yoru ni ("One Stormy Night"). It's the story of a goat and a wolf who both take refuge from a storm by hiding in a mountain hut. It's dark inside the hut, so the two can't see each other, but as they talk, they become friends. After the storm,

once each realizes who the other is, they try to keep their friendship a secret from their respective clans.

These are the books Kudou ends up reading (though he's reading them out of series order. For shame, Kudou!):

- Doshaburi no Hibi - "Rainy Days" (the real book's title is Doshaburi no Hi ni, "On That Rainy Day")
- Kiri no Mukade - "The Foggy Centipede" (the real title is Kiri no Naka de, "Within the Fog")
- En no Kirema ni - "A Break in the Relationship" (the real title is Kumo no Kirema ni, "A Break in the Clouds")
- Aru Hareta Hibi - "Sunny Days" (the real title is Are Hareta Hi ni, "On That Sunny Day")
- Fubuki no Anta - "Your Cold Demeanor" (the real title is Fubuki no Ashita, "A Snowstorm Tomorrow")

WILL KOTARO BREAK THROUGH?

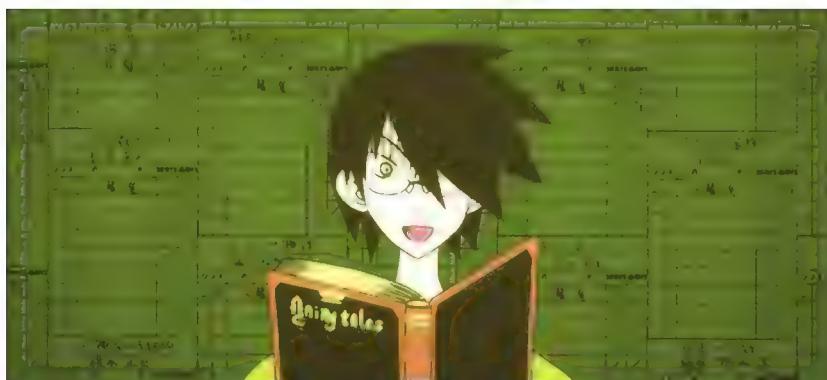
This book that Nozomu hides behind is a spoof on an actual 1980s manga named Kotaro Breakthrough. The real manga is about a high-school karate master named Kotaro; but in Nozomu's version, it seems like Kotaro's fighting prowess might still be in question.

REPEAT CUSTOMERS

At Kudou's suggestion, Nozomu decides to check out a book. But no matter which book he picks, Kudou has already read it first. This is a nod to Whisper of the Heart, a 1995 Studio Ghibli film based on a 1989 manga by Aoi Hiiragi. It's the story of Shizuku, a girl who loves to read and write. Upon looking through her library books, she notices that all of them were previously checked out by a boy named Seiji Amasawa.

The homage in Zetsubou-sensei goes even deeper than this, though. All four books that Nozomu holds up are books that Shizuku checked out (with the exception of "Hamburg Red", which was "Poe of Hamburg" in Whisper of the Heart). On the check-out cards for the first and last books, we can see that the author's name is: 木冬あおい. If you combine the first two kanji into one, you get: 栄あおい, which is Aoi Hiiragi, the author of Whisper of the Heart. Also, Seiji Amasawa, the boy from Whisper of the Heart, apparently checked out "Hamburg Red" right after Kudou did.

"EVERY LAST BOOK I'VE TRIED TO READ HAS ALREADY BEEN READ!"



As Nozomu says this, the background is filled with library check-out cards. Some are unreadable, and some are for books we've already seen, but there are a few new ones in there, too:

- "Harry Potter" by J. Rowling (A play on the "Harry Potter" series by J.K. Rowling.)

- “The Inugami’s Ballad” by Seishi Yokomizu (“Seishi Yokomizu” is written 横水正史, but if you change one of the kanji, you get Seishi Yokomizo (横溝 正史), who is an actual author. He wrote several famous mystery stories, including “The Inugami Clan” and “The Devil’s Ballad”, which have been mashed into one title here.)
- “Ryuuta and the Blue Rose” by Hide**** ****bara (The censored name is “Hideyuki Matsubara”, an author who specializes in children’s literature. Though it’s spelled differently here, “Ryuuta and the Blue Rose” is the actual name of one of Hideyuki’s works.)
- “Aesop’s Fables” by ***** Tanaka (The censored name is “Seiji Tanaka”, and this is referring to a music album, not a book. Seiji Tanaka is a vocal artist, and in 1973, he worked together with the poet Shuji Terayama to release a CD called “Aesop’s Fables”.)
- “Battle of Flames” by Asura K. (“Asura K.” is written アシュラ·K, but if you add a long vowel mark, you get アーシュラ·K, which is “Ursula K.”, as in the author Ursula K. LeGuin. The title “Battle of Flames” is Honoo no Tatakai in Japanese, a fiery Asuran twist on Ursula K. LeGuin’s novel A Wizard of Earthsea, which was released in Japan as “Battle with Shadows” (Kage to no Tatakai).)

“READING PITCHES AS WELL AS SKIPPER NOMURA!”

“Nomura” here refers to Katsuya Nomura, a man who was a baseball player for 26 years, and then a baseball manager for the next 24. His last position before he retired was as manager of the Rakuten Golden Eagles (which you can tell here by his “hair” (毛) cap - remember the very first episode of season one?).

The Eagles’ first season was in 2004, and they had a tough time of it; they were the first team in 40 years to lose more than 90 games in one season. So for 2005, they hired on Katsuya Nakamura. Bit by bit, he was able to turn things around for the team. In 2009, Nakamura’s last season before he retired, the Eagles won second place in their league.

“READING GREENS AT THE MASTERS!”

The golf ball in this shot says “Saru”. This is a reference to Pro Golfer Saru, a manga by Fujiko A. Fujio. It’s the story of a wild boy who looks like a monkey, but is shockingly good at golf. He gets into all sorts of golf-themed misadventures, and plays against villains like Red Scorpio, King Cesar, and Mr. X.

“READING POLLING TRENDS ON ELECTION NIGHT!”

Next, we’re shown a list of candidates for the Liberal Democratic Party, and one of them is “Jun’ichiro Ooizumi”. The first two kanji in his last name, ooizumi, mean “big fountain”. But if you swap out the “big” kanji for “little”, you get koizumi - the name of former Prime Minister of Japan, Jun’ichiro Koizumi.

There’s also a piece of paper off to the left, which says “Horie unconfirmed”. This is referring to Takafumi Horie, the founder of Livedoor. In August of 2005, Takafumi contemplated running for office as an LDP candidate, but eventually he ran as an Independent. He lost the election and went back to Tokyo to run his business... Then a few short months later, he was arrested and charged with securities fraud.

"READING THE FLOW OF A MAHJONG GAME!"



The man in the blue shirt sitting at the mahjong table is Tetsuya Asada, from the 1997 manga series *The Legend of the Gambler: Tetsuya*. It's set in postwar Japan, when the economy is struggling. Tetsuya discovers he has a talent for mahjong, and uses that skill to gamble for money.

YOU CAN READ GREENS THAT NOT EVEN SAKURA YOKOMINE'S DAD COULD READ! YOU'RE GOOD!

Sakura Yokomine is a professional golfer, and her first win was at the Life Card Ladies' Tournament in April of 2005. She was 19 years old at the time, and her father, politician Yoshiro Yokomine, was her caddy. Nozomu's line here is a backhanded compliment; in 2007, Yoshiro Yokomine was accused of making large sums of money by betting on his own golf games.

"YOU READ ELECTION TRENDS NOT EVEN FORMER DIET MEMBER OKADA COULD READ! AMAZING!"

Katsuya Okada was President of the Democratic Party of Japan (the main opposition to the Liberal Democratic Party). He took the office in 2004, and the DPJ had a great showing in the upper house election. But their success was short-lived - in the 2005 general election, Jun'ichiro Koizumi lead the LDP to a landslide victory, surprising everyone involved. It was such a crushing defeat that Katsuya Okada resigned as the DPJ's president. (So yes, in case you were wondering, this is also a backhanded compliment.)

KOIBANA BLACK

Koibana started out as a cell phone novel, a type of story written on cell phones and distributed via text messaging. Eventually it was published in book form, and there were two volumes: Koibana Red and Koibana Blue. Nozomu seems to have found another version called "Koibana Black". Sounds rather dark...



"ISN'T IT TOO EARLY FOR **** ADACHI TO KNOW SHE'S TWO MONTHS PREGNANT?"

Nozomu is thinking about a story that happened in 2005. Yumi Adachi, a Japanese actress and vocal artist, had been going out with an actor named Arthur Kuroda. However, she broke off the relationship, and then five months later, married comedian Jun Itoda. That same day, she held an interview session and announced that she was two months pregnant.

If you're wondering how being two months pregnant means "only missing one period", it's because in Japan, the length of a pregnancy is measured based on the first day of the woman's last menstrual cycle, rather than on the actual date of conception. So a woman who is "two months pregnant" has only missed one period. However, skipping a menstrual cycle can happen for many reasons other than pregnancy. That's why Nozomu is so suspicious.

ALCHEMY BY ANITA

This book that Kafuka is reading is a reference to Anita Alvarado, a woman commonly known as "The Chilean Geisha".

She was born in Chile in 1972, and in her late teens, poverty drove her to work in brothels. She eventually moved to Japan and engaged in prostitution there, and in 1997, she met Yuji Chida, an accountant with the Aomori Housing Cooperative. He showered her with money, but he was also abusive. The two ended up getting married back in Chile, but he would only visit her there three months out of the year.

Then, in 2001, everything came crumbling down for Yuji Chida. He was arrested for defrauding the Aomori Housing Cooperative out of \$11 million. However, Anita Alvarado was allegedly unaware of this, so it became a ticket to stardom for her, both in Chile and Japan. For the most part, she got to keep her lavish lifestyle, and she gained the attention of the press and the media, which led to movie roles and a singing career. She even wrote a book, though it wasn't called "Alchemy". But it was her biography, so you could say it was the story of turning something common into gold.

THE CENSORED SECTION



All the shelves in the library are marked with what genre of books they hold, like "Science Fiction" or "Philosophy". But in one particular shot, the shelf signs are censored, because they're supposed to be the names of different manga companies. The one behind Nozomu's head is too obscured to read, but the other two shelves near Kafuka are meant to be "Shogakukan" and "Kodansha".

"OR CONNING OLD PEOPLE INTO INSTALLING LOTS OF VENT FANS UNDER THEIR FLOOR!"

Most of Kafuka's examples of "thoughtlessness" are self-explanatory, but this one might be less known. Wood houses in humid environments usually need some kind of ventilation system under the floor, to help keep moisture away from the floor supports. Japan is a rather humid country, so underfloor ventilation isn't a bad idea. However, some scam artists will recommend excessive amounts of ventilation as a way to graft money from unknowing homeowners. Not only does it cost more, but it can also cause worse damage in the long run by drying out the mortar in the house's foundation.

I'M ON TOP OF THIS BOOKSHELF -TENMA

This is a note from Dr. Kenzo Tenma, the main character in Naoki Urasawa's popular 1994 manga *Monster*. At one point in the story, Dr. Tenma plans to assassinate someone with a rifle, and his hiding spot is on top of a bookshelf at the school library.

THE MOUSE'S LEGAL FILING

I think we all know a certain company with a mouse for a mascot that makes a whole lot of legal claims.

DIARY OF USUI KAGERO THE FIRST STORM OF SPRING

This whole sequence is a spoof on a famous 1973 commercial for Ryukakusan brand lozenges. In the original commercial, it's raining out, and a boy is walking home with umbrella in hand. A girl passes by from the opposite direction, sneezing from the cold. He goes to offer her a lozenge, but he isn't fast enough, and she walks away without taking one. Yet at the same time, we hear the boy say that he gave her one of his Ryukakusan lozenges and walked with her all the way home, which made her very happy. At the end of his fictitious story, the boy says, "I think that's how I'll write it up in my diary!"

EHIME PREFECTURE. TYPE A. T=165, B=84, W=55, H=85.

These are all statistics for Majiru's favorite real-life blog star, Kaori Manabe. She was born in Ehime Prefecture, her blood type is A, she's 165 cm tall (~5'4"), her bust measurement is 84cm (33.1"), her waist is 55cm (21"), and her hips are 85cm (33.5").

SUMMER OF THE USUME

This title is a spoof on Natsuhiko Kyogoku's 1994 novel *Summer of the Ubume*. In Japanese folklore, an "ubume" is the spirit of a woman who died in childbirth. An "usume", meanwhile, is someone who is thin. Like, say, Kiri.

IT'S ANKLE-SPRAINING GOOD CHA-O

In 1997, the Japanese variety show *How Does Wednesday Sound?* recorded a segment called "Total Domination of 21 European Countries". Two of the hosts flew to Paris, got a rental car, and did their best to sightsee 21 countries across Europe in 8 days. In the end, due to all sorts of misadventures and shenanigans, they only made it to 13 of the 21 countries.

Later, in 2006, the idea was revisited, this time as “Total Domination of 20 European Countries”. (Ireland was removed from the list due to its distance from everywhere else they were going.) They started out in Rome this time, and the director was having trouble saying the Italian greeting “ciao”. One of the other actors, You Oozumi, told him to think of it like cha, the Japanese word for tea. “Cha-o!”

As for being “ankle-spraining good”, on their very first full day in Rome, the director went out for an early morning jog and ended up spraining his ankle.

“WHAT’S SO GREAT ABOUT THAT STUPID GUY FROM KIRIN ANYHOW?!”

“That stupid guy” is Akira Kawashima, half of the comedy duo Kirin. He dated Kaori Manabe for a while, though the two didn’t stay together.

“IS THIS GAG TOO OLD FOR YOU?”

Kiri is referring to the pose she’s making, with her arms held at an angle that pushes her chest together. It’s the signature pose of a female comedy duo from the late 90s named Pirates. Both girls were swimsuit models, and the punchline of their jokes usually involved them making this pose and saying their catchphrase, “dacchu no”.

ZEN-ZA-REN GENERAL MEETING

“Zen-za-ren” is short for the Zenkoku Zashiki-warashi Renmei (“The Nationwide Zashiki-warashi Alliance”). If you remember from season one, Kafuka claimed that Kiri was a zashiki warashi - a spirit child who can’t leave, or the house will fall into disrepair.

PICO

From the way she’s teasing Majiru, we’re given the sense that Kiri has a thing for younger boys. With that in mind, Pico is the main character in *Boku no Pico*, an infamous hentai OVA starring a very young-looking boy.

PUTTING THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE

Pay attention to where this shows up in the shot, because the text on the blackboard here will be different every time we come back to this scene. Each time it changes, it will be a different yojijukugo - a popular turn-of-phrase made using four kanji. And thankfully, each one has a well-known English equivalent.

KIRI’S BOOK COLLECTION

Kiri’s reading material doesn’t do much to dispel any worries about her preferences. They’re almost all books that involve young boys. From left to right, there’s:

- **Labyrinth:** A reference to *Fantastic Detective Labyrinth*, the anime and manga series starring a genius 12-year-old boy.
- **How to Break the Seed:** “Breaking the seed” is a term fans use to describe the moment when characters in *Gundam SEED* enter a state of hyper awareness, which is represented by the image

of a seed breaking apart.

- **Pat's Secret vols. 1+2:** This refers to Pat Campbell, a character from Infinite Ryvius. Though the rest of the characters are all space cadets in training, Pat is just an 8-year-old boy who gets caught up in the story when he goes to space to visit his father.

- **The Negi Picture Book:** Negi Springfield, the main character in Negima! Master Negi Magi, is a 10-year-old boy assigned to teach a class of middle school girls.



- **Future Detective Conan vols. 1+2:** This is a mashup of two different anime series, Hayao Miyazaki's Future Boy Conan, and the mystery series Detective Conan. They're very different stories, but they both star young boys: an 11-year old in Future Boy Conan, and a high school student shrunk into the body of a six-year-old in Detective Conan.

- **The History of the Nationwide Zashiki-warashi Alliance:** Kiri is assumed to be a Zashiki-warashi, as mentioned a couple liner notes ago.

AOFUKU WHITE DARK MAN

These two signs are spoofs on the names of two actual types of sweets: "Akafuku" and "Shiroi Koibito". Akafuku is a rice cake covered with a thick layer of sweet red bean paste. Meanwhile Shiroi Koibito (which means "White Lover") is a European sandwich cookie with white chocolate in the center. Both of these sweets made the news in 2007 when their respective manufacturers were both caught violating Japan's Food Hygiene Law by falsifying their "best before" dates.

By the way, if you're wondering how "White Lover" became "White Dark Man", it's that the name Shiroi Koibito is written like this: 白い恋人. But for the poster on the wall in Kiri's room, the third kanji has been changed: 白い濃い人. It's still pronounced "shiroi koibito", but the "koi" here means "dark" - not as in the absence of light, but rather in the sense of a color that is deep and rich.

"WHO CARES HOW YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO EAT A CHOCOLATE CORNET?!"

This is a reference to a famous scene from the 2007 anime *Lucky Star*. The very first episode features a (very long) conversation about the mechanics of eating chocolate cornets. And cream puffs. And strawberry shortcake. It doesn't have anything to do with anything, which is why Majiru compares it to Kiri's odd statements about anpan and melon pan.

CHICO

Chico is another character from the hentai OVA *Boku no Pico*. He's even younger than Pico.

COCO

And finally, CoCo is yet another character from *Boku no Pico*. He is, of course, another young-looking boy.

INCREASE

According to Maria's chart, pointless stories are popular; and in 2007, it seemed like the number of them was only going up—.young-looking boy.

THE RESTAURANT OF MANY CONDOLENCES

This next episode preview is a spoof on Kenji Miyazawa's story "The Restaurant of Many Orders". (The Japanese word for "order" is chuumon, while "condolences" is choumon.) As mentioned in a previous liner note, two exhausted hunters find a restaurant in the middle of the forest. They think "many orders" refers to the restaurant's popularity, but actually, they're being tricked into following "many orders" so that they can be devoured.

"BURY YOURSELVES IN SAND TO COUNTER THE POISON."

Burying oneself in sand is actually an old traditional remedy for blowfish poisoning. However, it doesn't work. At all. There is no known antidote for blowfish poison. But victims can sometimes survive, if they make it to the hospital quickly enough.

EPISODE 5

TEAM PLAY

Since this text is displayed Lupin the 3rd style, it's only fitting that this is a Lupin the 3rd reference! Episode 137 of Lupin the 3rd Part Two is called "The Magnificent Team Play Operation", and Lupin's gang has to work together to steal a diamond called Cleopatra's Tear. It's considered an all-time classic episode in Japan. (The double-reference is that this episode deals with Sports Festivals, which literally involve team play.)

CLASS 3-B ASAI



There is no "Class 3-B" at Nozomu's school, which uses the Iroha sequence to name their classes (his class is Class 2-He, for example). Instead, this is a reference to a popular TV drama called Mr. Kinpachi in Class 3-B. (The show was about a junior high school, so the "Class 3" in this instance is the third year of junior high, or what we would call 9th Grade in the US.)

The show ran from 1979 all the way to 2011, and dealt with a lot of the tough social issues that can well up in junior high school, such as gender dysphoria, suicide, and teenage pregnancy. "Asai" here is surely meant to be Yukino Asai, a character from the very first season of the show. She has sex with another student and ends up pregnant at age 15, but although the teachers pressure her to get an abortion, she doesn't want to end her child's life. In the end, the teachers relent, and give their support to Yukino.

This storyline was shocking for a television show in 1979, and the storyline didn't pull any punches or sugarcoat the situation. But that focus on tough issues is part of what made the show so popular.

IN A BAD PLACE



In the next shot, we see two giant groups of people gathered around two poles. This is a game called *bou-taoshi*, often played at sports festivals. There are two teams, each subdivided into a group of “attackers” and “defenders”. The defenders on each team surround their pole, and do their best to keep it from falling over. Meanwhile, the attackers on each team run in and do everything they can to wrestle their opponent’s pole to the ground.

It’s a very physical sport, to be sure. And if you look closely, near the base of the yellow team’s pole, you can see Chitan Tsubouchi from *Katte ni Kaizou* being crushed under many, many feet.

THE PHASES OF THE WILDERNESS

This is the name of a song by FictionJunction Yuuka. It was used as the opening theme song for the 2006 net animation *Intrigue in the Bakumatsu - Irohanihoheto*.

DE CULTURE

“Deculture” is a term from the classic anime series *Macross*. In that show, an alien race called the Zentradi use it to describe things that are “shocking” or “horrible”. (Eventually, in later installments of the series, humans adopt the word to describe things that are “fantastic” or “amazing”.)

Of course, here in *Zetsubou-sensei*, there’s a space between “de” and “culture”, emphasizing the pun connection with “culture”.

NOA

You might remember from a previous liner note that former Morning Musume star Nozomi Tsuji got pregnant in 2007, and had to put her career on hold. Her child was born that November, and the proud parents named their baby girl Noa.

There was just one problem. You might also remember from a previous liner note that kanji can be hard to read when it comes to names. Well, poor Noa was given just such a difficult name: 希空. This is a very non-standard kanji combination, to the point that no one was quite sure how to pronounce it.

“...THE RESULT WOULD BE HORRIFYING!”

As Nozomu says this, three different wrestlers put Chitan Tsubouchi from Katte ni Kaizou through the wringer. Though their faces have been covered with pictures of Maeda-kun, these three muscle men are all from the wrestling manga series Kinnikuman. First up is Neptuneman with his Quarrel Bomber, next is Terryman using the Kinniku Buster, and finally there's Kinnikuman himself performing the Kinniku Driver.

“IT WOULD BE LIKE TOSSING A RABBIT WITH A PULLED MUSCLE INTO A LION’S CAGE!”



The little pink rabbit in pajamas (with its face covered by Maeda-kun) is a spoof on the mascot for NOVA, a private English language school based out of Japan. NOVA started in August of 1981 as a way for people to learn English in a more robust way than they could through basic public education.

Business was good, and by 2003, NOVA had over 400,000 students across over 600 locations. But in 2007, it all came to a quick end. First, Japan's Supreme Court ruled that NOVA had broken the law when it refused to refund students who cancelled their contracts. Then the Trade and Economy Ministry forced NOVA to close some of its schools due to misleading advertising campaigns. This caused a dramatic decline in enrollment, which meant dramatically less money coming in, which meant NOVA was unable to pay its staff. That meant trouble for the company's over 4,000 foreign instructors, who lived in apartments paid for by the company. Suddenly they had no job and nowhere to live, and some couldn't even afford a plane ticket back to their home countries. By the end of the year, NOVA's stock was delisted, all their branches were closed, and the president of the company was removed.

So really, the metaphor of “a rabbit with a pulled muscle being tossed into a lion's cage” is a pretty apt description of how NOVA met its end.

STUDY ABROAD NEAR THE STATION

This was one of NOVA's advertising slogans. NOVA schools were often located near train stations, for ease of access to students.

RABBIT-MEAT CROQUETTE

The easiest reference here is the NOVA rabbit mascot being dead meat - but there's another angle to this. There was a second company that went bankrupt in 2007: Meat Hope, a meat processing company in Hokkaido. After a string of complaints and whistleblowing, an investigation revealed that Meat Hope had been padding their "100% beef" with all sorts of fillers like pork, mutton, innards, bread scraps, and yes, even rabbit. By August of 2008, the company had shuttered their doors completely.

"AND WHOEVER BECOMES MY WIFE WILL SEE FAR WORSE THAN THAT."



Nozomu is drawn a little differently here, and he's striking a peculiar pose. That's because this is a reference to the Studio Ghibli classic Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind, specifically a scene with Princess Kushana. When she reveals that her left arm is a prosthetic, her captors are shocked. But she only smirks and responds, "Whoever becomes my husband will see far worse than that."

WHAT'S HARUMI READING NOW?

Harumi recognizes the Studio Ghibli joke that Nozomu just made - perhaps because she's currently reading a doujinshi about characters from Studio Ghibli movies. It's a story pairing up Haku from Spirited Away and Ashitaka from Princess Mononoke. Meanwhile, the blonde man with glasses who's panicking at what he just witnessed is Colonel Muska from Castle in the Sky.

(By the way, if the comic seems familiar, it's because it's the same as Harumi's *Gundam SEED* doujinshi from season 1 episode 7, just with the characters swapped out.)

**"WHEN "HUMANITIES" PEOPLE PARTICIPATE IN THEM,
IT ALWAYS INVOLVES TERRIBLE DANGER!"**



As Nozomu says this, two shadowed figures are fighting in the background. Many anime fans can identify them on sight - they're Goku and Vegeta from Akira Toriyama's ever-popular series Dragon Ball.

THIS IS THE POWER OF CULTURE?

This is another reference from the Macross series, specifically the 1984 movie Do You Remember Love? In the world of Macross, the Zentradi are a race of giant humanoids who exist only for war. Culture of any kind is expressly prohibited. However, when the Zentradi begin to attack humans, they find human expressions of culture (especially music) to be confounding and debilitating. One of the Zentradi commanders, Vrlitwhai7018, exclaims, "This is the power of culture?"

**"A COMPETITION TO SEE WHO CAN GET
THE LOWEST MORTGAGE RATE!"**



The image here is a bunch of people with their hands full of paperwork, running from one building to another. The buildings are all marked as generic banks, loan offices, and money changers... all except for two.

One of the banks has its name censored, but it's meant to be the Dai-Ichi Bank, which was once one of the largest banks in the world. During the bubble economy of the 1980s, Dai-Ichi knowingly granted over 30 billion yen in loans to yakuza and corporate racketeers. When this eventually came to light in 1997, Miyazaki Kuniji, the former president of the Dai-Ichi Bank, ended up committing suicide.

The other unique store sign says "The Lover L'Amant". This is the title of an autobiographical novel by Marguerite Duras. It tells the story of when she, as a 15-year-old-girl, began having an affair with a 27-year-old man. Her mother is initially furious, until she learns that he's giving her money that can be used to pay off their debts.

"A MESSAGE RELAY RACE USING CHAIN EMAILS!"

The last line of the chain email, "It's going to get serious", is a catchphrase that was often used on the 2004 TV show Medical Horror Check Show. Each episode was themed around some type of disease that had common symptoms (like fever or back pain), but would have terrible consequences if left untreated.

"AND EVEN AN ONLINE CHEERLEADING COMPETITION!"

The text here is mimicking a thread on the Japanese message board 2-chan. The thread title is "Go for it! A thread for cheering on the red team. You can do it!" And then there are ten messages, all from anonymous posters:

1. This is a thread for cheering on the red team. Anyway, let's give them our support!
2. Do your best, red team! You're definitely gonna win! Hurray, hurray!
3. You're doing great, red team! There's no way you'll lose! Hurray! Hurray!
4. This year's red team is godlike. Just go with the flow. You're sure to win! Go get it!
5. The hell do you mean, "godlike"? The white team is way better. Suck it, red team.
6. The white team's here!!! Oh man, the white team defense force really sucks, lololol
7. Looks like you don't realize just how much better the white team is.
8. Comments 5 and 7 are from the same person. He's a white team lackey.
9. Forget that guy. More importantly, I'm hungry! What should I have for dinner?
10. Curry, obviously.

SAGE RECOMMENDED

On any of the -chan boards (2-chan, 4-chan, etc.), if you enter "sage" into the email field when you make a post, it will create the post without actually bumping the thread. (Sage, written 下げ in Japanese, means "to lower".)

It's considered courteous to "sage" if you want to post, but you don't think many people will find it interesting. It's also a way to post in a thread that you don't like without giving the thread any extra attention.

THE MONSTER OF THE KOSHIEI

When it comes to high school baseball, “The Monster” is Daisuke Matsuzaka. In 1998, Matsuzaka gained national recognition after a stunning performance in the Summer Koshien: first he threw 250 pitches over 17 innings in a hard-fought victory over baseball powerhouse PL Gakuen. Then the next day, he threw a 15-pitch ninth inning to win the semifinals. And the day after that, he pitched an 11-strikeout no hitter to win his team the Koshien championship.

THE LEFTY MONSTER

This is one of the nicknames for Takafumi Ogura. He’s a soccer player who played for several professional teams, including the Japan national team. Sports writer Tatsuhito Kaneko called Ogura “The Lefty Monster” because of his strong left-foot kicks, and the name stuck.

THE RED DEVIL

Bob Horner is an American baseball player who started out playing for the Atlanta Braves in 1978. But in 1986, all the Major League clubs started colluding to drive down player salaries (which they were later sued for in 2004), so Horner left the Braves and became a free agent. He ended up getting signed on with the Yakult Swallows in Japan’s Central League, and in his first game with them, he hit a home run. Then the next day, he hit three more. For game three, his opponents gave up and walked him three times. Then in the fourth game, Horner got two more home runs. Six home runs in four games is a fearsome feat, and so the Japanese sports world started calling him “The Red Devil”.

THE ORIENTAL WITCHES

Though the term “oriental” is no longer used to describe people, back in the 1960s, this was the nickname for the Japanese women’s volleyball team. It first came about when the team, which was an underdog team made up of former factory workers, won against the Soviet Union in the 1962 world championship. The Soviet press was so amazed that they called the team “The Oriental Witches”, and the rest of the world took the name up as well.

“Oriental Witches” might sound like an insult, but the Japanese press and the team itself adopted the title with pride. Masae Kasai, the team’s captain, spoke of it in an interview: “In Japan, a witch is a scary thing. But the nickname wasn’t meant to reflect this. It was a word to describe our volleyball play, which had never been seen before.”

The women would go on to represent Japan in the 1964 Summer Olympics, where they won the gold medal.

YOUR STOMACH IS A COSMOS!

The 2000 Japanese TV drama Food Fight tells the story of Mitsuru Ihara, a handsome man who is secretly a food-eating champion. As he vanquishes his enemies in the gritty world of underground competitive eating, he often croons out his catchphrase, “My stomach is a cosmos.”

HOT DOG TAKERU

This hot dog stand is named after Takeru Kobayashi, the Japanese competitive eater who took the food world by storm in the 2000s. His first appearance was at the Nathan’s Coney Island Hot Dog Eating Contest in 2001, where he ate 50 hot dogs in 12 minutes, almost double the previous record. It was so far beyond what anyone had done, that the

organizers ran out of signs to indicate how many hot dogs he'd eaten, and had to use handwritten signs instead. Takeru quickly became an international eating superstar, and as of this writing, holds 13 different world records related to food.

"...GAME RESEARCH CLUBS THAT SPLIT WATERMELONS IN 16 STRIKES!"



As Nozomu says this, we see a guy in a baseball cap make a watermelon explode by tapping it. This is a parody of the 1984 movie *GAME KING! Takahashi Meijin vs. Mouri Meijin Collide! The Decisive Battle!* It's a mockumentary about a showdown between two real-life gaming celebrities (who both worked for the game company Hudson Soft). In the movie's opening sequence, we see a montage of the two "training" by doing ridiculous things. In real life, Takahashi Meijin's big claim to fame was that he could tap the buttons on a Famicom controller 16 times per second; so here in the movie, he taps a watermelon so quickly it explodes.

(Also worth noting, the bee on the man's hat in *Zetsubou-sensei* is very similar to the bee in the Hudson Soft logo.)

TOKYO WATER

Nozomu is holding a bottle labeled "Tokyo Water" - and this is an actual, real-life thing. In 2007, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Waterworks started bottling and selling tap water for 100 yen per bottle. It was a publicity stunt to convince people that tap water in Tokyo is clean, safe, and just as good as any bottled water from a store.

KISS

This group likely needs no introduction for American viewers, but just in case: KISS is an American rock band that formed in 1973. They wrote and performed dozens of world-famous songs, earning 40 Gold albums, 14 platinum albums, and even 3 multi-platinum albums. Aside from their music, the band's most noticeable feature is their makeup. Each member wears their own de-

sign, which represents a unique persona. From left to right, the band members shown are The Spaceman (Tommy Thayer), The Catman (Eric Singer), The Demon (Gene Simmons), and The Starchild (Paul Stanley).

DON'T DRINK THAT

“Artsy kissing” is apparently just getting a second-hand kiss by drinking from someone else’s water bottle. However, this particular bottle has an orange label that says “Pico”, as in Boku no Pico, which you might remember from last episode’s liner notes.

WATCH YOUR HEAD

Akiyuki Shinbo is the director of Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei, but he also directed several other popular shows like Moon Phase, Pani Poni Dash!, Negima!?, and Hidamari Sketch. And in each of those shows, he used an old gag from the comedy group The Drifters where a washtub falls from the sky and hits someone in the head. Be careful, Class 2-He, no one is safe...

EF

This is a reference to the PC visual novel Ef: A Fairy Tale of the Two, and its anime adaptations Ef: A Tale of Memories and Ef: A Tale of Melodies. Both of the anime series were produced by SHAFT, and directed by Akiyuki Shinbo.

A BITTER DEFEAT



Kaere effortlessly kicks away all her would-be kissers, and they end up lodged in the floor with their legs sticking up in the air. This pose is a reference to the murder mystery story The Inugami Clan. One of the most striking scenes from the novel (and its movie version) is a pair of upside-down legs sticking out of a freezing lake, with the rest of the unfortunate corpse submerged under the water.

"IN ANY EVENT, EVERYTHING IS SPLIT UP INTO SCIENTIFIC, ARTSY, AND SPORTY TYPES!"

As Nozomu says this, we're shown a large chart filled with tiny text. From left to right, the columns are labelled: Scientific, Artsy, and Sporty. Then, each row categorizes a different subject:

- **Newspapers - Nikkei (Scientific), Asahi (Artsy), Yomiuri (Sporty):** These are all national newspapers in Japan. The Nikkei is the world's largest financial newspaper, the Asahi was founded in 1879 and is one of the oldest newspapers in Japan, and the Yomiuri has the world's largest circulation with over 7 million readers.
- **National Team Managers - Osim (Scientific), Okada (Artsy), Troussier (Sporty):** These are coaches of Japan's National Soccer Team. Osim was head coach in 2006, and he brought in the idea that the team should stop mimicking other teams, and work to develop their own strengths. When Osim had a stroke in 2007, he was replaced by Takeshi Okada, who valued loyalty and selflessness above all. As for Phillip Troussier, he was the team's head coach in 1998, and led Japan to the final 16 in the 2002 FIFA World Cup, which at the time was Japan's best ever finish in the tournament.
- **Playoffs - Seibu (Scientific), Ni-Ham (Artsy), Softbank (Sporty):** These three baseball teams are all part of Japan's Pacific League. From 1999 through 2006, the Seibu Lions team was home to "The Monster", Daisuke Matsuzaka. Ni-Ham, short for the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham fighters, had moved to Sapporo in 2004, and was hard at work on a grassroots PR campaign to gain popularity among fans. And the Fukuoka Softbank Hawks team was (and still is) one of the most successful franchises in the league, having won the Japan Series championship 11 times.
- **Countries - India (Scientific), Russia (Artsy), America (Sporty):** Several Indian cities are hubs for world-class IT and engineering, including Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Mumbai. Russia has a long, rich history of arts and architecture, such as onion-domed churches and hand-painted icons. And America takes its sports very seriously - especially the Super Bowl. Super Bowl XLIX, held in 2015, was the most watched show in television history with over 114 million viewers.
- **Subways - the Hibiya Line (Scientific), the Marunouchi Line (Artsy), the Touzai Line (Sporty):** These are three different lines on the Tokyo Metro subway system. The Hibiya Line runs through Ueno, which is home to the National Museum of Nature and Science. The Marunouchi Line runs through Shinjuku and Ikebukuro, both big commercial and entertainment districts. And the Touzai line is a rapid transit line that cuts straight across Tokyo from East to West.
- **Gundam - Turn A (Scientific), Z Gundam (Artsy), G Gundam (Sporty):** These are, of course, three different series in the Gundam franchise. Turn A Gundam is a story set far in the future, where mankind has been split into two groups: people with incredibly advanced technology who live on the moon, and the people on Earth who lost their technology ages ago in a great war, but are starting to rediscover it again. Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam is an early Gundam series from 1985, which the director, Yoshiyuki Tomino, used as a canvas to fill with all his negative emotions that he felt toward the world at the time. And last, but certainly not least, Mobile Fighter G Gundam is a wild, over-the-top series where enormous mecha fight in a planet-wide martial arts tournament to decide which country gets to rule the Earth for the next four years.

• **The Alfee - Prince (Scientific), Sakazaki (Artsy), Sakurai (Sporty):** The Alfee is a popular Japanese folk rock band that's been around since 1974. "Prince" is the nickname for Toshihiko Takamizawa, the group's electric guitarist. He's well-known for the unique vibrato he employs while playing the guitar, using it almost like a synthesizer. Sakazaki Konosuke, the band's acoustic guitarist, is the storyteller of the group - as a child, he wanted to be a rakugo performer. And Masaru Sakurai, who plays the electric bass, is a huge fan of motor sports. So much so that he would go sit in the stands during sound checks and ask the PA staff to play recordings from F1 races.

• **Ways of Dying - Poison (Scientific), Hanging (Artsy), Seppuku (Sporty):** Just gonna let you use your imagination for this one.

• **Abe - Promising (Scientific), Not Promising (Artsy), Who the heck is that? (Sporty):** "Abe" is most likely "Koubou Abe", an author and playwright born in 1924. He helped establish science fiction in Japan during the postwar period, which might explain why "scientific" people supposedly enjoy his writing, "artsy" people supposedly don't, and "sporty" people have had no exposure to him at all.

• **Masami Nagasawa - Love her (Scientific), Love her (Artsy), Love Her (Sporty):** Masami Nagasawa is a Japanese actress who's been in dozens of films and won several awards. She's played sci-fi roles in films such as Pyrokinesis and Godzilla: Final Wars, she's played artsy roles in films such as Crying Out Love in the Center of the World and Tears for You, and she's even played action roles in films such as Kingdom (for which she won the Nikkan Sports Film Award). So basically, all three groups agree: she's great!

YO, OBORODZUKI

This is an awful pun. "Oborodzukiyo" ("A Spring Night with a Hazy Moon") is the name of a famous Japanese folk song. The "yo" (夜) in the song's title means "night". But the way it's written here, the "yo" (ヨ) is instead just an informal, emphatic particle.

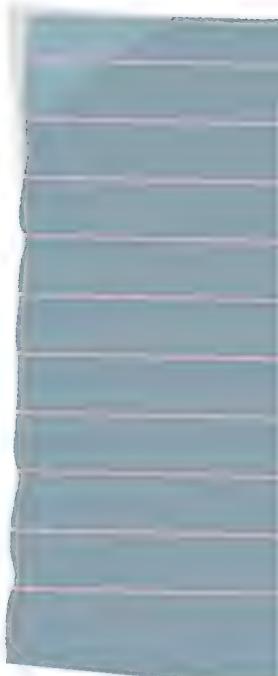
"...TOYOTA SUDDENLY MAKING THE SORT OF CAR THAT ONLY HONDA USED TO MAKE."

The two cars in Nozomu's example are the Honda Stream (on the left), and the Toyota Wish (on the right). Visually, the two cars are extremely similar. Honda began manufacturing the Stream in 2000, while the Wish didn't appear until 2003, so it's pretty clear where Toyota got their inspiration from.

By the way, it's Matoi standing next to the Toyota Wish, and she's wearing Behoimi's outfit from episode 10 of Pani Poni Dash!

"MANGA THAT ONLY RAN IN SUNDAY SUDDENLY RUNNING IN MAGAZINE."

This is a poke at Kouji Kumeta, the author of Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei. His previous manga, Katte ni Kaizou, ran in the comic anthology Weekly Shounen Sunday (published by Shogakukan). But when Zetsubou-sensei began, it did so in Weekly Shounen Magazine (published by Kodansha).



HIDAMARI YU SUKECCHI

And this is a poke at Hidamari Sketch, another anime produced by SHAFT. Not-so-coincidentally, we can see Hidamari Sketch characters at the bottom of the screen (Hiro, Miyako, Yuno, and Sae), and they're standing in front of the bathhouse from Hidamari Sketch episode 10.

"AIRING ANIME GEARED TOWARDS "DEEP VIEWERS" ON SUNDAY MORNINGS."



Here we have a parody of Renton and the Nirvash type Zero from the 2005 anime Eureka Seven. It aired on Sunday mornings in Japan, an odd timeslot for a show aimed at a relatively older crowd.

A STRIKING SILHOUETTE

After the Eureka Seven picture disappears, there's a quick flash of red with the black silhouette of a girl holding a cleaver. This is meant to be Rena Ryuugu from the Higurashi series, another example of something that's "hard to classify". Though Rena looks like a cute brown-haired girl, and on the surface she's kind and naïve, she's also one of the story's most violent characters (and that's saying something).

"IN THIS WAY, THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN MANY THINGS ARE NOW BEING BLURRED!"

As Nozomu says this, a giant list appears on the screen behind him, filled with these items:

- **The Liberal Democratic Party / The Democratic Party of Japan:** at the time Zetsubou-sensei aired, these were the two biggest political parties in Japan.

- Banks / Insurance Companies / Brokerage Firms
- Female TV announcers / Pop idols
- **The Central League / The Pacific League:** these are Japan's two major baseball leagues, similar to the American League and the National League in the US.
- **K1 Rules / Pride Rules:** K1 and Pride are both international mixed martial arts promotions that got their start in Japan. The main focus for K1 was originally kickboxing, while Pride began with professional wrestling.
- **PSP / Portable DVD player:** The PSP, or "PlayStation Portable", was Sony's handheld gaming device that they released in 2004. Most portable gaming devices of the day used cartridges, but the PSP used a proprietary optical disc format called UMD ("Universal Media Disc"). UMDs had enough storage space to hold movies, and indeed, several movies were released that way for viewing on the system.
- **Fax machines with emailing capabilities / PCs with faxing capabilities**
- **Picture Dramas / Moving Manga:** Picture Dramas are usually short anime episodes with very little actual animation - camera pans and maybe some lip flaps are the most movement you'll see. On the flip side, "Moving Manga" is the technique of taking manga panels and using computer software to make the elements in the picture move.
- **Light Novels / Essay Manga:** Most US anime fans are probably familiar with light novels - they're books, generally aimed at young adults, which feature story content very similar to anime and manga. "Essay manga", meanwhile, are manga that usually feature story content similar to books. They're usually non-fiction stories, where the author writes and draws about their own life.
 - **Comics with doujinshi in them / Doujinshi sold at bookstores**
 - **Manga authors / Manga editors (Weekly Shounen Magazine only)**
 - **Maid cafes / Sex parlors**
 - **Dreams / Reality**
 - **Nada Sousou / Miyuki:** Nada Sousou, sometimes called Tears for You, is a 2006 movie about budding romance between a stepbrother and stepsister. Miyuki is a 1980 manga by Mitsuru Adachi that deals with the same subject.
- **Hiroshi Fujiwara and Tomitoku Shuu's faces:** Hiroshi Fujiwara is the musician credited with popularizing hip hop in Japan. He's also an influential streetwear designer, and appeared in the 2003 film Lost in Translation with Bill Murray. Tomitoku Shuu, meanwhile, is a celebrity chef who ran several restaurants and appeared on various TV shows, including Iron Chef.
- **Rie Tomosaka's right / left:** Rie Tomosaka is an actress and pop star who was popular in the 90s and early 2000s. She was praised for her beauty, but as she aged, her jaw became crooked. This gave her face an asymmetrical appearance, which was difficult for her, since she already suffered from anorexia and body image problems. Nowadays, her crooked jaw has been mostly healed, apparently due to a type of bone-setting massage called "korugi".

FANCY FOOTWORK

A soccer ball flies towards Harumi, but after a Matrix-style “bullet time” shot, she deftly slams it back outside. This is an homage to Shaolin Soccer, a 2001 sports comedy starring Stephen Chow.

Likewise, the image of Harumi running as a child - all zipping legs and a completely static upper body - is an homage to the anime 8 Man. In the show's opening, the titular hero runs just like that, and ends up being faster than a moving train.

WHAT'S HARUMI READING NOW?

The doujinshi in Harumi's hands says “Shige/Shou”. This is referring to Shigeki Satou and Shou Kazamatsuri, two characters from Daisuke Higuchi's popular soccer manga Whistle!

MUDA, MUDA, MUDOU

There are two parts to this quick joke. The saying should technically be: “Muda, muda, muda!” (“Useless, useless, useless!”) Jojo's Bizarre Adventure fans should recognize it - Dio Brando and his stand The World both shout this as a battle cry.

But here in Zetsubou-sensei, the last “muda” has been swapped out for “Mudou”. Based on the kanji, this is most likely a reference to Mudou Oda, a TV celebrity who also happened to be a Buddhist priest. However, he wasn't exactly a saint; in 2002, he was arrested on charges of forgery and affiliation with the yakuza.

CLENCH YOUR TEETH

When Comiket opens, Harumi needs to go fast! We see her teeth flash, and suddenly she's moving at superhuman speed. This is a reference to Joe Shimamura, the main character of Cyborg 009. One of Joe's cyborg abilities is Acceleration Mode, which he activates by biting down on a switch embedded in his teeth. Once he's in Acceleration Mode, Joe can run at speeds up to Mach 5.

ADULT CIRCUMSTANCES

If you remember from last episode, “grownup stuff happened” and they weren't able to change the number of days relating to Kikuko Inoue's birthday. It's a little hard to say what the problem was this time, but perhaps it relates to the definition for a “scientific ending”. In the original Zetsubou-sensei manga, an ending was scientific if it was “about revenge” (shippe-gaeshi). But here in the anime, an ending is scientific if it's “thought provoking” (kangae-ochi). Why the change? Who knows, guess grownup stuff happened.

BUT WHY...

The phrase written here in Japanese is “Nande zo...” It's a turn of phrase usually heard on the island of Shikoku; but for nerd culture at large, it's associated with Nagai-sensei, one of Japan's early Internet celebrities. As far back as 2002 he was gaining fame on 2-channel, and by 2006, he was “streaming” on a peer-to-peer platform called Peercast.



A FAMILIAR LIGHT

The dome-shaped explosion, heading toward that exact configuration of skyscrapers, is a callback to the explosion in *Akira* which destroyed Tokyo and sparked World War III.

ZETSUBOU PHASE COMPLETE

This is a reference to the first episode of *Mobile Suit Gundam 00*. The main character, Setsuna F. Seiei, shows up out of nowhere in a Gundam, thoroughly wrecks a military demonstration, and then calmly says, “First phase, complete,” before leaving as quickly as he came.

Here in *Zetsubou-sensei*, this is Nozomu letting us know that Part A is over.

WE MAKE MOX FUEL BY MIXING URANIUM WITH PLUTONIUM...

This next part of the episode is all about “leftover items”. With that in mind, this bit of Lupin-style text is from a piece of the original manga story that couldn’t be included in the anime version. It’s this episode’s leftover item!

In the manga version, during Maria’s long list of example lucky bags, her last one is full of the leftover plutonium from an electric company. Nozomu balks at the danger, but an electric worker in a hardhat steps in and explains the fuel recycling program to Nozomu, using the text we’re shown here.

I ALWAYS CALLED HIM “LEFTOVER”

This title is a parody of the first line in Natsume Souseki’s famous novel *Kokoro*. The original is: “I always called him ‘Sensei’.”

REAL DEALS

One of Nami’s example bags is from a store called “Takashimaya”, and Nozomu is standing in front of a shop called “Boutique Rako”. These are both real-life shops in Japan. Takashimaya is a department store chain, and Boutique Rako is a small shop located in front of Shimoigusa Station near SHAFT headquarters.

KIDS RUN THROUGH THE CITY CORNER

As Nami and Nozomu are discussing lucky bags, a group of children run by. Then, a couple shots later, Nozomu is sharing the screen with a big red balloon. This is an homage to *The Red Balloon*, a French movie from 1956 (which released in Japan that same year). It was the story of a boy who has a sentient red balloon that follows him wherever he goes, much to the delight of all the other children that he meets.

LUCKY BAG CONTENTS SET A



One of the “prizes” in this lucky bag is a pillow shaped like a woman’s lap. You might (or might not) be surprised to know this is a real thing. It’s called the Hizamakura Lap Pillow, and just like you see here, it’s a pillow shaped like a woman’s waist and legs, complete with a skirt that you can look up to see panties.

“YOU CAN’T FOOL ME!”



As Nozomu says this, a man’s face looms on the left side of the screen. This is Bae Yong-joon, star of the Korean drama Winter Sonata. Bae Yong-joon’s character in the show wears tortoiseshell glasses, so naturally, when Winter Sonata became a huge hit, Yong-joon was also tapped to be a spokesperson for eyeglass companies.

"IT'S GLASSES FRAMES THAT YOU'D NEVER ACTUALLY WEAR..."

There's a road sign in this shot, with a symbol on it that looks like a red heart. This is the symbol for the Japan Glasses Party, a fake political party that was created as a PR stunt for Eye Topia, an eyewear shop in Tokyo. The new “party” was introduced in 2006 via a series of parody press videos on YouTube featuring the two members of comedy duo OgiYahagi, both of whom wear glasses.

TSURUPIKA

The mascot on this jar has huge eyebrows and a bald head with three vertical hairs. It's the main character from Tsurupika Hagemaru, a popular children's manga from 1985.

MEAT BAG



The three unfortunate characters in this bag are all from Pani Poni Dash! From left to right, it's Lord Cat, Giant Salamander, and Mesousa.

LUCKY

The next lucky bag is obscured - it's a blue bag, and the store's name ends in “te”. It's most likely meant to be Animate, Japan's largest retailer of anime and video game merchandise. And the leftovers in the lucky bag are... The limited edition version of Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei DVD 1, and a copy of the Zetsubou Song Collection. Ouch!

IN YOUR EYES

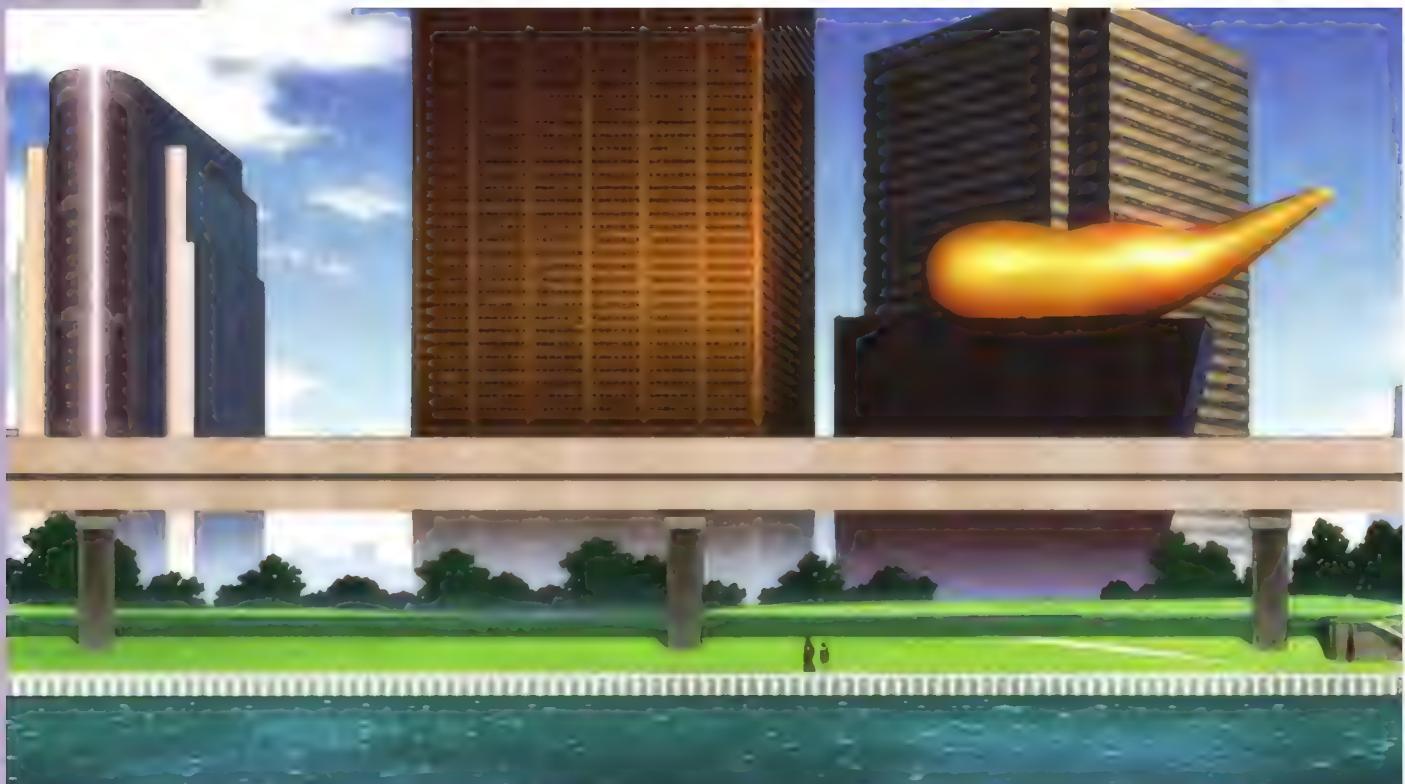
The kanji for “lucky” appears in the pupil of Kaere's eye. The slightly deeper joke here is that if you combine the kanji for eye (眼) and the kanji for lucky (福), you get ganpuku (眼福), which means “to see something beautiful” - or, in other words, “eye candy”.

FUJIWARA TOFU SHOP LUCKY BAG D

This is a play on Initial D, the street racing manga series by Shuichi Shigeno. The main character of Initial D, Takumi Fujiwara, works as a tofu delivery driver for his father at the Fujiwara Tofu Shop.



"THIS IS A LUCKY BAG FROM A BEER BREWERY."



As Kafuka says this, we're shown a real set of buildings in Tokyo. The big golden building in the middle is the Asahi Beer Hall, part of the headquarters for Asahi Breweries. Although you can't see it in this particular picture, the top of the tower has a white texture around the top, which makes the whole building look like a giant glass of beer.

To the right is a shorter black building with a golden structure on top. This is the Super Dry Hall, one of the most recognizable buildings in Tokyo. The gold structure is called "The Asahi Flame", and it's meant to represent "the burning heart of Asahi beer". However, thanks to its rather unfortunate shape, it's colloquially known as "The Golden Turd".

"A LIGHT IS BEING SHINED ON THINGS THAT USED TO BE DISCARDED AS LEFTOVER WASTE..."



We see Nozomu and Kafuka at a garbage dump, and there's some kind of heavy machinery half-buried in the foreground. This is based on a real image that was included in the Japanese government's 1981 White Paper on the Environment. In a section discussing the rise in both general and industrial waste, there was a picture of half-buried machinery at Yumenoshima, an artificial island near Tokyo that was built using waste landfill.

"SO THERE REALLY IS LUCK TO BE FOUND IN LEFTOVERS!"

Right after Kafuka says this, a tiny list flashes up on the screen. Most of the items in the list are normal, real-world methods of recycling. But there are two manga jokes in there, as well...

"Castoff Magazine newcomer → Hit Sunday manga artist" is referring to artists who start off in Weekly Shounen Magazine, then swap over to Weekly Shounen Sunday and hit it big. One prominent example is Fujisaki Masato, who debuted in Magazine in 1998 with *Luna Sea*, then found success in Sunday in 2003 with *Wild Life*.

"Castoff Sunday manga artist → Jump hit manga artist" is being presented here as the next step up, career-wise. One manga author who took this path is Kouji Kiriyama. In 1991, he published *Sengoku Koshien* in Weekly Shounen Sunday, but in 1993, he got the chance to publish *Ninku* in Weekly Shounen Jump. *Ninku* became so successful that it was made into a 55-episode anime series, plus an animated film.

"THIS IS LUCKY BAG FROM THE O-ASTER-IX BUFFALOES TEAM!"

In 2004, the two worst-performing Pacific League baseball teams - the Orix Blue Wave and the Osaka Kintetsu Buffaloes - announced that they would be merging for the 2005 season. Not only did this mean that several players would be out of a job, but it also meant that there would be an imbalance between the Pacific League and the Central League. So, in an attempt to solve the problem, Internet companies Livedoor and Rakuten swooped in and decided to create a new Pacific League baseball team, the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles. It was created with surplus players from the Blue Wave and the Buffaloes who weren't invited to be on the merged team.

This is why Maria's lucky bag says "Blue Wave", and why all the helmets sticking out of it are helmets for the Eagles team.

"THIS IS PLASTIC SURGERY CLINIC LUCKY BAG!"

Though the logo on the bag is cut off, we can see just enough of it to know that it's based on the logo for the Tokyo Ueno Clinic, an actual clinic in Ueno that specializes in treating male genital disorders such as phimosis and erectile dysfunction.

MAZDA LOLITA ENGINE

Most cars have a piston engine, but in the 1960s, Mazda developed a rotary engine to help distinguish itself from the competition. Rotary engines are smaller and lighter than piston engines, and since there are no reciprocating parts, they're also quieter.

The joke with this sign is that in katakana, the word "rotary" is spelled: ロータリー, but if you swap the characters around, you get "Lolita": ロリータ

SAODAKE SHOP

This is a quick reference to a book called *Saodake-ya wa Naze Tsuburenai no ka?* (“Why Don’t Bamboo Pole Shops Go Out of Business?”) It was an economics book written by Shinya Yamada, the self-professed “Otaku Accountant”, and it did quite well - by April 2007, it was a million-seller.

AYAYA

There’s an empty can of peaches next to (ex-)Tarou Sekiutsu’s box, with the word “Ayaya” written on it. This is a reference to Aya Matsuura, a pop singer with Hello! Project. Her nickname is Ayaya, and in 2002 she released a song called “Momoiro Kataomoi” (“My Peach-colored, One-sided Love”). The music video featured Ayaya and two peach-colored puppets working in a cartoonish peach canning factory.

DRIP DRIP SPLASH

The sound effect of rain falling is written here as “shito shito picchan” (しとしと ぴっちゃん). This isn’t a normal onomatopoeia - it’s very specifically how the rain is described in the opening song to the 1973 live-action TV series *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

DO YOU LIKE ANYONE?

If you recall from an earlier liner note, Zetsubou-sensei’s Assistant Director Naoyuki Tatsuwa said in an Animage interview that “The girl I loved had a boyfriend.” This Lupin-style text is the question that prompted his answer.

“AND THEN WHAT HAPPENED?!”

Several times throughout this skit, Maria will pop up and ask, “And then what happened?!” She’s parodying a character from the 1969 anime series *Hakushon Daimaou* (“The Sneeze Demon”). In that show, during scene changes, a little mustachioed man with a red hat would pop in and say, “And then what happened?”

FREE CELL PHONES

There are three pamphlets in the stand outside the cell phone store, labelled Mikaka, Au, and Son.

“Mikaka” is a play on NTT DoCoMo, the leading mobile phone service provider in Japan. If you type the letters N-T-T on a Japanese keyboard, but have it set to hiragana output, you’ll get みかか (“mi-ka-ka”) instead.

“Au” is another Japanese mobile phone company; their name is officially written using Roman letters, but on the pamphlet in Zetsubou-sensei, it’s written in katakana as “アウ”.

And last but not least, “Son” refers to Masayoshi Son, the president of multinational conglomerate Softbank. Though Softbank’s main focus is investment management, they do also provide services for internet and cell phones.

SPECIAL PRICE TAKE IT, SAILOR

Whoever wrote this ad must be a *Lucky Star* fan... The opening song for that show is “Motteke! Seeraafuku” (“Take It! Sailor Uniform”). Whereas this phone banner says “Motteke! Suihei O en” (“Take it! Sailors pay 0 yen”)

JAPAN GETS IT BEFORE THE REST OF THE WORLD!



The face on this poster is meant to be Spider-Man, and is specifically referring to the movie Spider-Man 3, which released in Japanese theaters on May 1st, 2007. The American release was on May 4th, but Sony released it three days earlier in Japan to take advantage of Golden Week, a huge week-long holiday there.

WE'RE CUTTING OUR OWN THROATS!

Near the bottom of this banner, there's a picture of a tray of pachinko balls. If you're unfamiliar with the game, pachinko is a bit like slot machines, but instead of winning money, you earn a bunch of little balls that you can exchange at a counter for prizes. This banner is claiming that their pachinko parlor hands out so many prizes, they're losing money!

The catch is, the prizes aren't the real draw of a pachinko parlor. Although most gambling in Japan is illegal, pachinko slides under that rule because it's "entertainment", and the patrons aren't winning money directly. Instead, patrons take the prizes they win, and exchange them for money via someone who conveniently sets up shop near the parlor, and just happens to want to buy all the prizes. Legally, the shop claims it's not connected to the pachinko parlor. But the shop is totally connected to the pachinko parlor.

So even when pachinko parlors pretend that they're losing money on all the prizes they give away, it's just a ruse - they're going to get them all back shortly anyway.

SHOUT, SHOUT, LET IT ALL OUT

One of Abiru's ad examples is a picture of three people on a TV screen - a woman in a skirt, with a man in a suit on each side of her. This is poking fun at a commercial for Apaman Network, a real estate company in Tokyo. In the commercial, actress Aya Ueto is dressed up like an Apaman employee, and she's shouting phrases like, "I'm going to do my best! I'm going to do my best for the customer! Until they find... they find... their ideal house!" On the one hand, that's a very nice sentiment. On the other hand, "I will help the customer buy a thing" is probably the bare minimum of what someone should expect from a business, so it's a little odd to have it shouted out into the sky like a lofty ideal.

THIS EPISODE FIRST AIRED ON JUNE 16TH OF SHOWA 82.

This is an odd thing to say, partly because the year Showa 82 doesn't exist.

Though the Gregorian calendar is widely known and used in Japan, historically Japan has used a dating system based around the reign of emperors. The Showa era, specifically, covered the years 1926-1989, when Emperor Hirohito was in power. Thus, since Hirohito assumed the throne on December 25, 1926, the rest of that year was known as "Showa 1", the year 1927 was "Showa 2", and so forth.

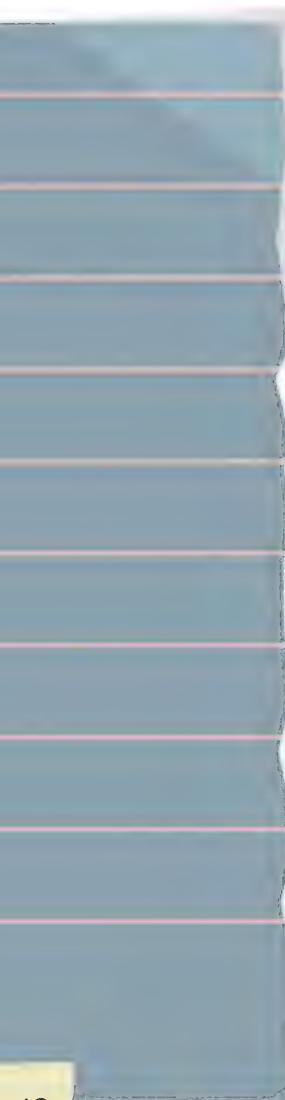
Likewise, when Emperor Hirohito died on January 7, 1989, the Showa era ended. That means the last Showa year was Showa 64. The rest of 1989 was then known as "Heisei 1", to mark the start of Emperor Akihito's reign.

Doing the math, Showa 82 would equal out to the year 2007 - if Showa 82 existed, that is.

If you look, you'll see nonexistent Showa dates all throughout the show. Why is this strange system being used? That remains to be seen...

(However, even with the year corrected, that text line is still odd. Though it specifically says "aired" (housou), the first broadcast of this episode was actually on February 2, 2008. It was the print manga version of this story that first appeared in June of 2007.)

"IS IT AN INCREASE OR A DECREASE?! MAKE UP YOUR MIND!"



Taxis charge more for their service during late-night hours, usually between 11PM and 5AM. At one time, it was a 30% increase over daytime prices. But in 2003, many taxis in the Tokyo area reduced their late-night service fees, so that it was only a 20% increase over daytime prices. So, yes - still an increase, but a decreased increase. Sorry, Chiri!

"I'VE LOST ALL HOPE IN OUR FAVOR-FISHING SOCIETY!"

When Nozomu says this, a wall of text races up the screen. Here's what it says:

- **Trust us, we'll de-nuclearize:** North Korea has a shaky history with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the intergovernmental organization dedicated to inhibiting the use of nuclear weaponry. Back in 1985, North Korea ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), but their declaration didn't match up with inspections. In other words, North Korea had undeclared plutonium. Eventually, in 1993, the IAEA called upon North Korea to square things up, but instead, North Korea announced that they were withdrawing from the NPT. Over the next two decades, North Korea kept promising to dismantle their nuclear program in exchange for favors, and then reneging on the promise and performing nuclear tests anyway. Finally, in 2012, all pretenses were dropped, and North Korea proclaimed that they would use the weapons as they saw fit.
- **America's "Iraq liberation" policy:** After Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, they were driven back out by a coalition of 35 countries in the Gulf War. However, when the war ended, the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, was not deposed. As the years passed and Hussein continued to violate international law, the US

government continued to search for a way to remove him. To that end, The Iraq Liberation Act was signed into law in 1998. Its stated purpose was “to establish a program to support a transition to democracy in Iraq.” But this was only one of many reasons that the US finally invaded Iraq in 2003, and overthrew Saddam Hussein and his government.

- **Magazine and Sunday’s “special prices”:** The prices for Weekly Shounen Magazine and Weekly Shounen Sunday are listed on the cover as the “special price” for the magazine... but really, it’s just the normal price.

- **Saying stuff like, “Be awed at the sight of my prowess!”:** This is Keigo Atobe’s signature line from Prince of Tennis. Keigo is good at tennis and he knows it, and this line is his way of literally commanding respect.

- **Doctors’ attitudes (Like, “Hey, I just healed you, buddy”)**

- **The attitudes of cell phone companies who say, “We’ll replace it for free this time”**

- **A host saying, “I let you dream for a while, so show some gratitude”:** Just to be clear, the meaning of “host” here is “someone who works at a Host Club”. Host Clubs are a type of establishment where female patrons pay male staff to drink and flirt with them. In this hypothetical scenario, it seems like either the woman has run out of money, or her time is up.

- **A Frenchman saying that Japan will get to drink Beaujolais first:**

Beaujolais nouveau is a special type of wine grown in the Beaujolais region of France. According to standards set by the French government, Beaujolais wine can only be officially sold after 12AM on November 15th. That means, just by virtue of the fact that Japan is so close to the International Date Line, Japanese people will always be among the first to be able to legally drink Beaujolais - several hours before anyone in France.

- **We gave you the pandas, now fork over the cash:** Relations between China and Japan were strained after World War II. But in 1972, Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei made an official visit to China, and diplomatic ties were reestablished. China gave two pandas to Japan, for the Ueno Zoo. Japan, meanwhile, started a program of Official Development Assistance to China, to help the country recover. It was a series of low-interest loans, grant aid, and technical assistance that lasted over forty years, to the tune of 3.66 trillion yen. To be fair, this was in exchange for China abandoning World War II reparation claims. But especially in recent years, as China’s GDP surpassed Japan’s, the average Japanese taxpayer started to question if the policy needed to continue.

- **A smoker who says he’s doing his part to boost tax revenue:** Tobacco prices in Japan are among the cheapest in the world; so even though the tax rate on tobacco is high, it doesn’t generate the type of revenue some might suspect. Add to that the extra costs incurred by smoking, such as healthcare expenses and property damage from accidental fires, and there maybe isn’t too much left to brag about.

- **An Italian car maker that says they’re “sharing” the cars with their customers:** This is most likely Ferrari, the Italian sports car manufacturer that got its start in Formula One racing. The founder,

Enzo Ferrari, had no intention of creating automobiles for sale to the general public. When he did eventually start to sell cars, it was only to help finance his racing endeavors.

- These list gags seem like favor-fishing. Sorry.

ONMYOU-JI

Onmyouji, as it's written here, does mean "Grateful Life Temple". But the far more common way to spell it is 陰陽師, which means "sorcerer" or "exorcist".

TO MAKE A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL, WE'RE CONDESCENDINGLY SWITCHING TO TERRESTRIAL DIGITAL BROADCASTS

The swap from analog television broadcasts to digital officially began in 2008. However, some stations started broadcasting in digital as early as 2003, which led to confusion over duplicated channels. Then there was the issue of older TVs without digital receivers, which required special converter boxes in order to view digital content. But low-income households couldn't afford the rather pricey converters, prompting the government to set up a program to distribute them. All in all, it was something of a mess for consumers, without much tangible benefit for them.

WE LOST YOUR PENSION DATA, BUT WE'RE CONDESCENDINGLY CALLING THESE "RELIEF MEASURES"!

The Social Insurance Agency, the government body in charge of pension records, computerized all their data in 1979, and then attempted to integrate all their various databases together in 1997. The years silently crept by until May 2007, when it was exposed that 50 million people who had paid their pension dues before 1997 were now missing from the system.

The fallout was enormous, and the government scrambled to send out notices to those affected. People whose data was lost needed to verify their pension and personal information, make additions or corrections, supply supporting documents, and so on. This was all presented to the public as "relief measures", as though the government was doing citizens a favor; but since it was the government's fault to begin with, "atonement measures" might have been preferable.

WE'RE TO BLAME, BUT WE'RE CONDESCENDINGLY SAYING WE'LL "OVERLOOK" WHAT THEY DID!

According to the rules of the Japan High School Baseball Federation, high schools aren't allowed to waive tuition for prospective players. But in March of 2007, it came to light that the Seibu Lions, a pro baseball team, had secretly paid the tuition for a player named Katsuhito Shimizu, on the condition that he join the Lions when he graduated. Like a collapsing house of cards, it was suddenly discovered that over 350 schools had waived tuition for specific players, including top-ranked schools that often went to Koshien.

None of this was really surprising to the general public, who figured that paying for tuition like this was par for the course. (Especially since other high school sports are eligible for scholarships; baseball is the exception.) If anything, the sentiment seemed to be that it was the Federation's fault for not realizing that this would happen.

"I'LL MAKE YOU A VOICE ACTRESS" HE SAID, CONDESCENDINGLY...

Sakumi Matsuda was the founder of Arts Vision, one of the industry's largest talent agencies. But in 2007, he was arrested for sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl who was auditioning to become a voice actress. When questioned, he admitted to the crime, saying he did it "because she was cute." Though he was never prosecuted, the scandal did cause him to resign from the company.

"I CONDESCENDINGLY MADE HIM DRAW AN END TITLE CARD FOR ME. SORRY."

The man speaking is meant to be Kouji Kumeta (though the one doing his voice is Nozomu's voice actor, Hiroshi Kamiya), and he's referring to the end card you're about to see at the end of this episode. It was drawn by Kenjiro Hata, the artist best known for creating Hayate the Combat Butler. Before Kenjiro started his own career, he was Kouji Kumeta's assistant.

YES, I'M GONNA SHINE IN YOUR LOVE

The pachislot game Moeru Marin Batoru! features a fully-voiced song called "Love Love Submarine", and this is a line from that song.

If you're unfamiliar with pachislot games, they're basically slot machines that dispense pachinko balls instead of money. And just like pachinko machines, they come equipped with fancy LCD screens that pump out music and show animated stories as the player continues to play.

"IT'S A REMNANT OF THE BUDDHISM-SHINTO MIX FROM BEFORE THE MEIJI ERA."

Kafuka is referencing a real historical event here. Shinto is considered Japan's indigenous religion, dating back to around 300 BC. But when Buddhism was introduced from China in the 6th century, Japanese people generally assumed that both were true, and began to mix the two together. Temples devoted to buddhas (beings who have attained enlightenment in Buddhism) were attached to Shinto shrines devoted to kami (the gods of Shinto), and the two were worshipped together.

However, when the Meiji government rose to power in Japan in the late 1800s, they wanted to remove all foreign influence, which included Buddhism. The Kami and Buddhas Separation Order was issued in 1868, and it led to the closing of temples, confiscation of land, and destruction of Buddhist items like books, statues, even temple bells. This was meant to reduce Buddhism's influence and wealth, and return power to Shinto, especially its devotion to the Emperor as a kami.

Yet the separation order was never fully able to remove the influence of Buddhism from Japan. This can still be seen today - 90% of funerals in Japan are Buddhist ceremonies. At most, what the order accomplished was creating the impression that Buddhism and Shinto are two different things.

NOBEL PRIZE

The man on this poster is Koichi Tanaka, a Japanese electrical engineer who won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2002. He, along with John Bennett Fenn and Kurt Wüthrich, were recognized for their work in the field of mass spectrometry.



MELON BREAD HOW SAD

In 2006, a third grader wrote a song about melon bread, called “The Melon Bread Song”. These were the opening lyrics:

Anpan has sweet red beans in it
But melon bread doesn't have any melon
Curry bread has curry in it
But melon bread doesn't have any melon
Melon bread is my favorite
But it doesn't have any melon. How sad!

The artist's name is Yuppi. Not only did she write this song herself, but she sang and played the guitar for it, too. A fan-made video for her song made it to YouTube, and the rest was history. It caught on like wildfire, and ended up with her getting a record deal out of it in 2007.

IN CASE OF GODZILLA DISASTER RELIEF MISSION DANGEROUS WILDLIFE EXTINCTION

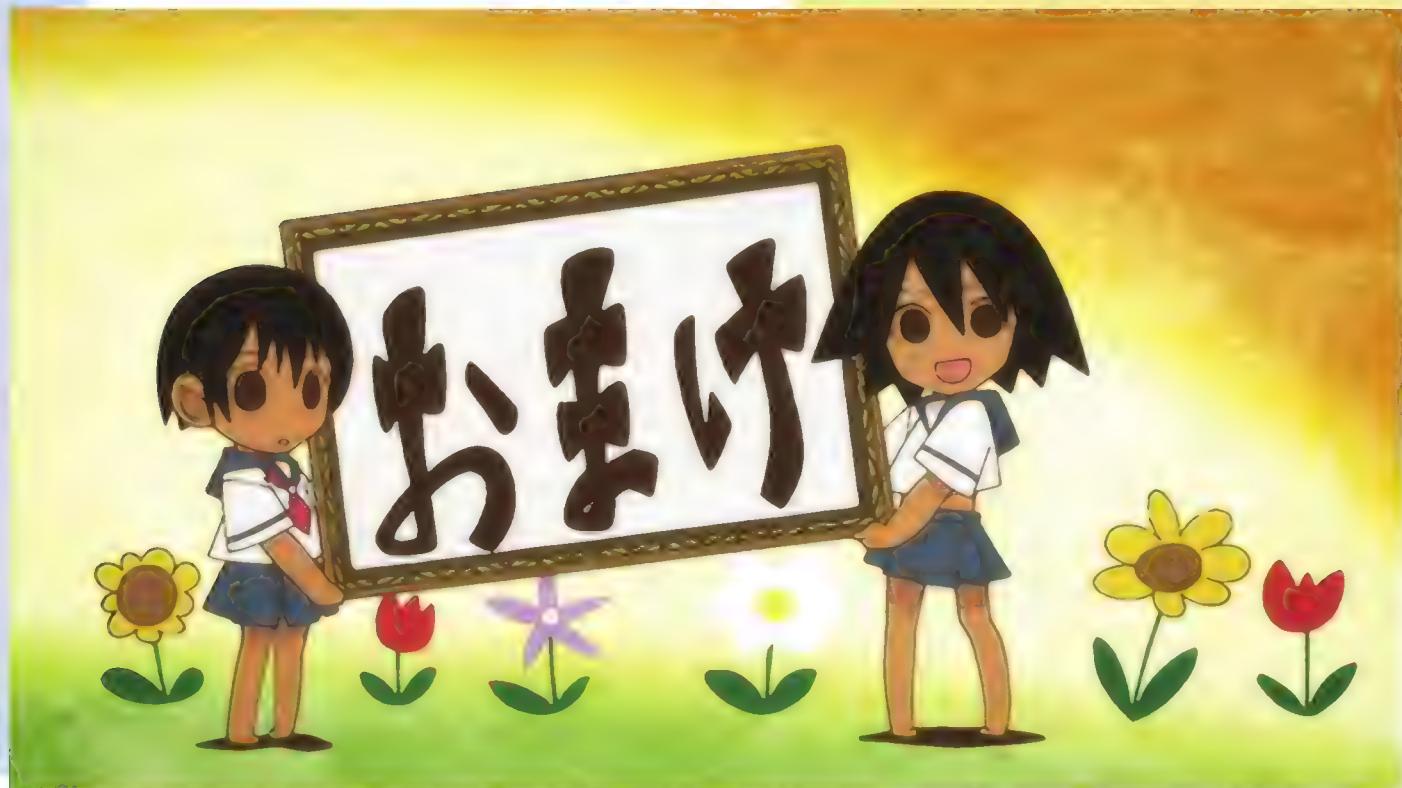
Whenever any wildlife starts to get overpopulated in Japan - especially animals that are dangerous to people or harmful to crops - it's fairly common for the local government to get involved. For example, they might offer a payout to hunters who kill boar or deer. This is generally known as Dangerous Wildlife Extermination.

However, if Godzilla ever shows up, the government response might need to be a bit... bigger. Yamane Ryuji of the Democratic Party of Japan thinks so, as well. In 2005, he told the General Affairs Committee of the House of Councilors that many UFOs had reportedly arrived on Earth, and that it could be a problem for Japan's defense. He raised the subject again in 2007, asking the government if it had ever confirmed the existence of UFOs. The answer was no, but that didn't stop UFOs from becoming a hot topic of conversation for quite a while.

HIPPO TURTLE

The Japanese word for hippo is "kaba" (カバ), and the word for turtle is "kame" (カメ) (or "game" (ガメ) here, since it's being used as a compound word). But if you take these four katakana and reverse them, you get Mega Baka (メガバカ), which is the name of a one-shot manga from 2008. It became famous when it was named one of the finalists for the Dragon Cup, a contest where 10 manga artists compete to be published in Weekly Shounen Magazine. It became infamous when it was discovered that the artist had plagiarized from several different manga, including Death Note, Air Gear, and Tenjho Tenge.

"NOW AN EXTRA!"



We're shown a quick little scene of Maria holding up a frame in a field of flowers. This is a spoof on the intro cards for Nadia's Omake Theater, which was a series of featurettes that used cutesy characters and gag humor to explain the universe of Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water.

THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI IS FOUND IN TSUNDERE

This is a parody of a line from Yamamoto Tsunemoto's book of tales about his life as a samurai, *Hagakure*. The actual quote is: "The Way of the Samurai is found in death."

RODRICO OF IZU

This next episode preview is a spoof on Yasunari Kawabata's novel "The Dancing Girl of Izu". In Japanese, the word "dancing girl" is *odoriko*, but for this preview, it's been changed to "Rodrico" (*rodoriko*).

In the original story, a 14-year old girl runs naked out of a bathhouse, waving. The narrator just laughs, taking it to be a sign of her youth. But in this parody version, when Rodrico runs naked out of a bathhouse, it doesn't sound like anyone's laughing.

EPISODE 6

TAIYO HIGH SCHOOL

Today, the high school is named "Taiyo High School". It's the name of the school in the 1973 live-action TV series *Tobidase! Seishun* ("Jump into Youth!"). In that show, it was the principal's policy to never turn anyone away, so the school ended up becoming a haven for troubled kids from all around the country.

TIGREX IS SCARY

Tigrex is the flagship monster from 2007's *Monster Hunter Freedom 2*. It's a colorful red and blue wyvern with a head like a *tyrannosaurus rex*.

IS 2G OUT YET?

And this is referring to *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite*, an expanded version of *Monster Hunter Freedom 2* that released in Japan on March 27th, 2008. (The Japanese title of *Monster Hunter Freedom Unite* was *Monster Hunter Portable 2nd G.*) This episode first aired on February 9th, 2008, so they had less than two months to go!

BECAUSE EINSTEIN ORIGINALLY VIEWED THE UNIVERSE AS STATIC...

This big chunk of Lupin-style text is a (very) quick introduction to the Big Bang theory. Not the 2007 American TV series, but the actual theory on the expansion of the universe, first proposed in 1927 by Father Georges Lemaître, a priest and theoretical physicist at the Catholic University of Louvain. Many cosmologists of the time, including Albert Einstein, refused to accept the idea that the universe was expanding. But as technology improved, observational evidence continued to

favor Lemaître's theory; and when cosmic microwave background radiation was discovered in 1965, the Big Bang became the preeminent theory of the origin of the universe.

I BEG YOU, DO NOT KNOW

This title is a twist on a tanka from poet Akiko Yosano. The real title is "I Beg You Brother, Do Not Die", and it's about a sister who fears that her younger brother might die in war.

PUTTSUN PURIN

There is a brand of pudding in Japan called "Pucchin Purin". It's a little different from what most Americans might think of as pudding; it's closer to a caramel custard or a flan. In each single-serving container, there's a layer of caramel sauce on the bottom that's intended to be on the top when you eat it. So first you turn the container upside down over a plate, and pop a little plastic release lever on the bottom, which lets the pudding slide out without breaking. That clicking sound is the "pucchin" in Pucchin Purin.

However, here it says "Puttsun Purin", and puttsun means "to go crazy" or "to lose one's temper".

OSHIO WAS 30 YEARS OLD

Going by the kanji (and the age), she's most likely referring to Manabu Oshio, a former singer and actor. And if that's the case, she dodged a bullet. In 2009, Oshio was arrested on charges of drug possession and neglecting to care for a hostess he was with, who also used his drugs and died as a result. He ended up serving four years in prison.

IT'S ACTUALLY A REALLY SCARY BUG BITE (YOU'LL PROBABLY DIE)

This is another reference to Medical Horror Check Show, the TV series mentioned in a previous liner note. Potentially lethal bug bites are right up that show's alley.

ELECTROMAGNETIC WAVES

Cell phones send and receive signals using RF waves, a form of energy in the electromagnetic spectrum. Though there has been no scientific proof of any adverse health effects from exposure to RF waves, in the early days of cell phones, there was a lot of public concern that excessive cell phone use might cause brain cancer, or other such maladies.

"PLEASE LEAVE ME IN THE DARK!"

As Nozomu cries out for ignorance, a huge list starts scrolling up behind him. Here are the examples listed:

- **Miss World's plastic surgeries:** In 2005, Maria Julia Mantilla Garcia from Peru was crowned Miss World. During interviews, she did admit that Cesar Morillas, a Peruvian plastic surgeon, gave her a nose job and breast augmentation. But when Cesar said in his own interviews that he also removed fat, operated on several other parts of her face, and gave her buttock implants, Maria was incensed. She denied it all, and threatened to sue.

• **What happens after the end of Densha Otoko:** Densha Otoko (Train Man in English) is a supposedly true story that first came about through posts on 2-channel. One poster, a self-professed shy otaku, intervened when a drunk man was harassing women on the train. Then, to his surprise, one of the women sent him a thank-you gift. This led to him posting on 2-channel for help and advice, and the community came together to cheer him on in his romantic pursuit.

This series of posts was eventually collected into a novel, which was so popular that it was also made into manga, a TV drama, and even a live-action movie. However, the story never goes beyond what happened after the otaku and his love interest started dating. Did it go well? Did they break up? In the real 2-channel discussion thread, there are several posts (and lewd ASCII art) from posters who are skeptical that the otaku will be able to hold a relationship. These were obviously edited out of the book, and never made it into any other version.

• **The “Ippai no Kakesoba” author’s grift:** Ippai no Kakesoba is a novel by Ryouhei Kuri, about a poor mother and child who come to a soba restaurant every New Year’s begging for food. She only asks for one serving for the two of them to split, but the shopkeeper secretly makes enough for them both. The novel, which the author claimed was a true story, was originally beloved and even made into a movie, but eventually the story was shown to be false. What’s more, it came to light that the author had been committing acts of petty fraud for years.

• **The story that “Nobody Knows” is based on:** Nobody Knows was a successful movie that debuted at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. It told the story of a group of four siblings who all had different fathers, and once their mother found a new boyfriend, she neglected them to the point of total abandonment. However, as sad as the movie was, the real event it was based on was even more tragic: in 1987, a mother gave her 14-year-old son \$350, told him to watch his three younger siblings, and left. When city officials finally discovered the children nine months later, they were living in filth and incredibly malnourished, and one of the 14-year-old’s friends had killed the youngest child.

• **Where horses with broken legs go:** When a horse breaks a leg, the horse is almost always euthanized. Unlike humans, horses have light leg bones, and when they break, they tend to shatter. Because of this, repairing the bone is often impossible.

• **The family register of a parent and child who don’t look alike:** Sometimes it’s best not to ask the question unless you’re ready to hear the answer.

• **A net idol’s real age:** It’s assumed that most internet celebrities are fudging their age.

• **How much it costs to make cola:** Whatever the price you pay for a bottle of Coca Cola, you can be sure that the cost to make it is significantly cheaper. Though bottling and shipping and retailer cuts can add a fair bit, the ingredients in soda are all very inexpensive.

• **How to make a bomb:** Both sharing the details and applying the details are a crime.

• **What’s under the floors of defective housing:** If something is wrong with your house’s floors, you are likely in danger, and it will likely be expensive to fix.

• **Your girl’s religion:** Modern-day Japan has more than its fair share of cults. Beyond just the headline-makers like Aum Shinrikyo, Pana-Wave Laboratory, Happy Science, and Soka Gakkai, it’s estimated that there are around 2,000 cults currently operating in Japan.

• **Who’s inside the mouse and the duck:** When you go to Disneyland, that’s not actually Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck walking around.

• **A Countach's real top speed:** This is meant to be "Countach", a model of car made by Lamborghini. Its top speed was advertised as being 187 miles per hour, but even the 25th Anniversary Edition model only made it to a top speed of 183 mph.

• **The '86 you bought is really an '85:** In the racing manga Initial D, the main character Takumi Fujiwara drives a Toyota AE86. Takumi's best friend Itsuki wants to buy a car just like it - but the one he ends up buying turns out to be a Toyota AE85 instead.

• **The results of reader polls:** Asking for the public's opinion is always a risky proposition. The Japanese network Fuji TV has a program called Weekly Fuji TV Critique, where people can write in and express their thoughts about the network. Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei spoofed this with a handful of short skits called "Weekly Zetsubou-sensei Critique", where Kudou and Chiri read viewer feedback, all of which was negative.

• **How many copies that one manga has sold:** If you recall from previous liner notes, Kenjiro Hata used to be Kouji Kumeta's assistant. Kenjiro then went on to create Hayate the Combat Butler, which as of June 2022, has over 20 million copies in circulation.

"LIKE WHEN YOU RENT THE NEXT VOLUME OF 25..."

This is a reference to the American crime drama 24. It premiered in 2001, and ran for nine seasons.

HEROES IS GREAT! LET'S ALL WATCH IT

And this is a reference to Heroes, another popular American TV show that began airing in 2006.

RAMPAGING CATFISH



In Japan, there's a widely-held belief that catfish are connected with earthquakes. The idea has its roots in mythology, specifically the story of Oonamazu, a giant catfish which was said to live underground and shake the earth. But the connection has real-world origins, too. On November 11th, 1885, an eel fisherman reported catfish acting odd, which he took to be a sign of an impending earthquake. Then, when the great Edo earthquake struck that night, his story was reported far and wide. From that point on, catfish and earthquakes were indelibly linked in Japanese culture. Cartoon catfish are used as logos on Earthquake Early Warning devices, and catfish are connected to earthquakes in several anime and manga. For example, in the SNES game The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, a giant catfish gives Link the Quake Medallion.

STANDING RACCOONS

This isn't actually a raccoon, it's a red panda. In 2005, Futa-kun the red panda became a national sensation when zookeepers at the Chiba zoo took a photograph of him standing on his two hind legs. The zookeepers were happy about his popularity, if a little confused, since it's not rare for a red panda to be able to stand on its hind legs. All red pandas can do it; they use it as a defense mechanism in the wild.

"TH-THIS IS... A CROP CIRCLE?!"

When the camera changes to a letterboxed view as Nozomu steps out of the tall grass, it's a parody of a scene from the 2002 M. Night Shyamalan movie Signs. In that movie, Graham Hess (played by Mel Gibson) steps into a clearing in a cornfield, only to discover that it's part of a crop circle.

TAKE ANOTHER LOOK

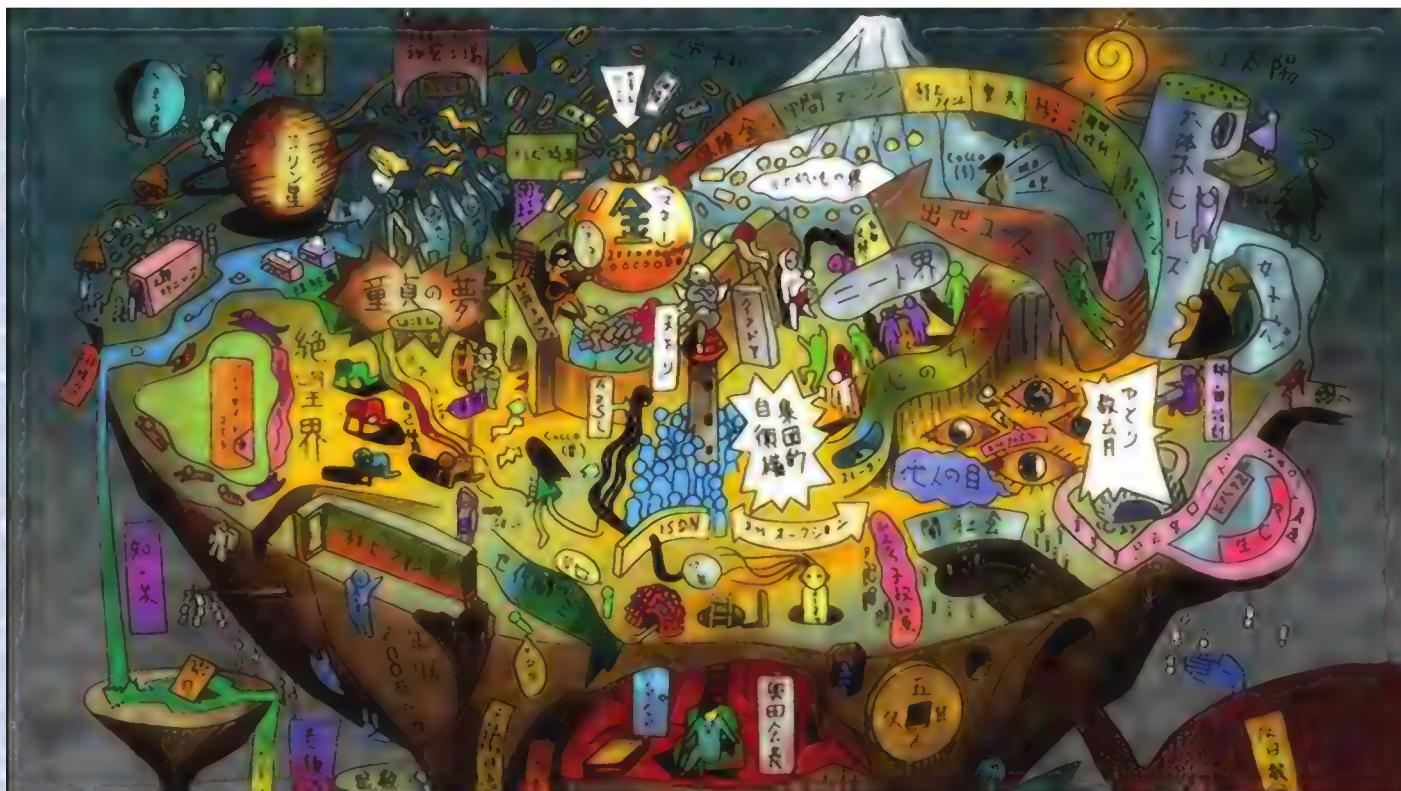
The scene cuts back to the school, and for just a moment, we can see by the gate that the school's name has changed to Kawahama Municipal High School. This was the name of the school in School Wars, a 1984 live-action drama about an underdog high school rugby team.

"HONESTLY! THE CLOSING CEREMONY IS ALREADY OVER..."



As Chiri complains, we see two little identical drawings near her. This is a stylized version of the logo for a Japanese textile company called Kamawanu. "Kama" means "sickle", "wa" means "circle", and **ヌ** is the hiragana letter "nu" - so for their logo, Kamawanu places these three things beside each other, like a picture puzzle to figure out.

"BEHOLD. THIS IS THE UNDERLYING TRUTH OF THE UNIVERSE!"



Oh, boy. This is really big, with a lot of parts, so let's take it one piece at a time.

- In the upper left, there's a blue planet attacking a brown planet. The blue planet is "Hekiru", and the brown one is "Korin". Hekiru represents voice actress and singer Hekiru Shiina, and Korin is a planet that pin-up model Yuko Ogura actually claims to have come from. (It's apparently an in-joke from when she was in middle school.)
- There's a woman standing on Planet Korin, punching a box that says "Hit Parade". The Night of Hit Parade was a variety show from 1995, and Yuko Ogura appeared on it as a guest. But that was before she adopted her current "cutesy" stage persona, so her voice and mannerisms were entirely different. Apparently she'd prefer it if that footage didn't exist
- The pink building underneath Planet Korin is marked as the Ueno Clinic. If you recall from a previous liner note, the Tokyo Ueno Clinic specializes in male genital disorders.
- Wind is blowing from Planet Korin, and lifting the skirt of a girl nearby. Is that Kaere, perhaps?
- Blue figures are running towards the flashing panties. They have "love" and "masturbation" written on their chests, with the word "union" floating nearby.
- Near these figures is a river, labelled "Sex Crimes".
- Above the blue figures, a jagged building floats in the sky. It's "Cherry and the Secret Factory", a play on Roald Dahl's famous children's book Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. However, given the ties between "cherry" and virginity, and the panties spectacle happening right outside, this factory is probably adults-only.

- The factory is pumping out Whitebands, plastic wristbands associated with the Whiteband Project. It was an initiative to end global poverty (in the US, it was known as Make Poverty History). The idea was that people would purchase the wristbands to show their solidarity, and the funds would go to help the poor. But in practice, what happened to the funds wasn't so clear.

- Underneath the waves of Whitebands, there's a green box shooting out radio signals marked as "idol voice actresses", and the green box itself is labelled "TV Saitama". Television Saitama is an independent TV station that airs a lot of anime (including Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei). And "idol voice actresses" refers to chapter 97 of the Sayonara Zetsubou-sensei manga, where Chiri is berating Nozomu for using the term "idol voice actress CD". She says he has to choose one term or the other - but the joke is, the woman who plays Chiri, Marina Inoue, is both an idol and a voice actress.

- Beneath the blue figures, there's a big spiky word balloon that says "A virgin's dream", and then a little yellow head is adding the word "Shokotan". Shokotan is the nickname for Shoko Nakagawa, a Japanese celebrity whose career has close ties to anime and tokusatsu shows. She's best known for being the presenter of a variety show called Pokémon☆Sunday, and given the show's younger age demographic, there were likely many virgins watching.

- To the right of that brown spiky word balloon, there's a giant wall with an arched gate. The wall is labelled as the "Annual Income Wall".

- There's a man in sunglasses playing the guitar on the other side of that wall, and he's saying "Hamasho". If you remember from episode 1, this is a nickname for famous singer/songwriter Hamada Shougo.

- There's also a man outside the Annual Income Wall, guarding the gate with his arms crossed, and saying the word "Shogun". This is a caricature of Kim Jong Il, the former supreme leader of North Korea. "Shogun" was his nickname, and since the Korean people faced such incredible hardship under his tenure, he's depicted here as an impediment to wealth.

- To Kim Jong Il's left is the word "restructuring". In Japanese, this is a polite way of saying "getting fired".

- A little further left, we see people kneeling on the ground, near a sickly looking red stream. The red stream is labelled "personal bankruptcy".

- Looking further to the right, near the middle of the picture, there's a tall tower with a red roof, and a grey person sitting on top. That tower is marked as "Hello Work", which is the name of the Japanese Government Employment Service Center - in other words, it's where unemployed people go. Thus the throngs of people clamoring around the base of the tower.

- The grey person, meanwhile, is labelled "amakudari". This is the Japanese term for a high-ranking government official who retires, and promptly takes on a high-ranking business job. This brings with it risks of collusion, makes their retirement pension seem like a waste of money, and ensures that they'll never have to struggle with the masses down below.

- Behind the tower, there's a hole in the Annual Income Wall, with black cables coming out of it. These are marked ADSL. You might be familiar with DSL (Digital Subscriber Line), a fairly common type of Internet technology that delivers data through existing phone lines. ADSL (Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line) is a subset of DSL that allows for separate upload and download speeds, which is good for residential users who generally need more download speed than they do upload speed. At the time Zetsubou-sensei aired, it was the fastest Internet option for the average home user in Japan.



- However, further down the ADSL pipeline, there's another wall, marked ISDN. This stands for Integrated Services Digital Network, and as far as Internet service goes, it was a step up from dial-up over copper telephone wires, but it couldn't match the speeds of ADSL.
- Finally, the ISDN line unravels into Nichrome wire. You won't get much Internet service over that, but at least it can be used as coiling in space heaters to keep warm.
- Oddly, one of the ADSL wires is snaking off to the right, and forming into a dark-haired woman named Cocco. What's more, this is labelled as being her "former" version. Cocco is a singer/songwriter who got her start in 1997, then "retired" in 2001. (Don't worry, this isn't the last you'll see of her.)
- Moving back to the left, in front of the kneeling people, there are large kanji scrawled into the ground that mark this place as "Land of Despair".
- To the left of that is an orange building with purple and brown figures splayed on the ground around it in a circle. This orange building has "Genocide Comiket" written on it, referring to Summer Comiket in August of 1992. The temperatures were so high that year, and the crowds so dense, that heatstroke ran rampant. Many people passed out, and the first-aid room looked more like a field hospital.
- To the right and slightly down from Genocide Comiket, there's a large wall near the cliff edge. It says "Murakami Fund", in reference to a mutual fund started by shareholder activist Yoshiaki Murakami. Murakami's modus operandi was basically to find struggling business, craft ways to profit from the situation, and then leave before the company collapsed. Perhaps not surprisingly, he was indicted for insider trading in 2007.
- Next to that wall, there's a blue man with "loser" written across his chest, and he and others are clinging precariously to a cliff labelled "Two Million Annual Income Wall". A country's poverty rate is the ratio of its people who live on one half or less of the median household income, and in 2007, Japan's median income was 4 million yen (approximately \$40,000). So this cliff, at 2 million yen, represents poverty.
- There's a purple doll gazing at the cliff from the far side of the wall, with "Simon Yotsuya" written next to it. Simon Yotsuya is an artist who specializes in life-sized dolls. At first he would make dolls that were complete, but as his style advanced, his pieces would have human faces and hair, but half-finished bodies revealing the wooden frames and ball joints beneath the skin.
- The green river to the right of the purple doll is labelled "The Generational Gap", and there are two little green people on either side of the river, one named "Seiko", and the other "Sayaka". This refers to singer/actress Seiko Matsu, and her singer/actress daughter Sayaka Kanda. In the 2000s, Sayaka had a string of boyfriends that Seiko did not approve of, and their fights caught the media's attention.
- Beneath Sayaka, there's a banner that says "Sazaebon", which was a character created as a mashup of the friendly housewife from Sazae-san and the comically dumb father from Bakabon. Sazaebon's ridiculous face was plastered on keychains, t-shirts, pencils and more, and it was a hot seller. The only problem was, Sazaebon's creator never got permission from the people who made Sazae-san and Bakabon. Both were furious.
- On the bottom left, we can see the "Sex Crimes" river running down and pooling up on a small platform. The purple box designates this place as "The Fountain of Knowledge".



- Floating in the pool, there's a yellow book marked as "Penguin Club". Not to be confused with Disney's online game Club Penguin, Penguin Club is an adult manga anthology magazine that's been running since 1986.
- Fittingly, the water running off the platform and into the void is labelled "libido".
- In the center-bottom of the whole picture, there's a man sitting in a comfy-looking chair. He's flanked on either side by boxes that say "Chairman Okuda" and "hybrid", and on the floor, there's a book that says "Jump". This is Hiroshi Okuda, the chairman of the Toyota Motor Corporation from 1999-2006. He was the man in charge when Toyota released the Prius, the world's first mass-produced gasoline-electric hybrid car. As for the Shounen Jump magazine on the floor… maybe he just needs something to do now that he's retired?
- To the right of Chairman Okuda, there's what looks like a giant gold coin on the side of the cliff. This is actually a tsukubai, a basin used for ritual washing at temples. In fact, this is based on the tsukubai at Ryouan Temple in Kyoto, with the kanji all around it meaning: "I only know that which I need to know".
- A little down and to the right of the tsukubai, there's a blue die. We can only see three of its faces, but the kanji on them are 自, 民, and 党. Put them together and you get 自民党 ("jimintou"), an abbreviation for the Liberal Democratic Party.
- Above the tsukubai, there's a pink puddle labelled "One-Child Policy". This was an initiative implemented in China starting in 1980. Citing overpopulation concerns, the Chinese government passed a law that families could only have one child. However, this led to significant human rights abuses. Women who were pregnant with their second child when the law was passed were rounded up by officials and had their babies forcibly aborted. Parents who already had a child were sterilized. And since sons are preferable to daughters in Chinese society, under the One-Child Policy, mothers would more frequently abort their children if they were girls, so that their one child could be a boy. This has led to a gender gap that is still widening today, even though the One-Child Policy was finally lifted in 2021. According to journalist Mei Fong, the Policy was lifted "because [China has] too many men, too many old people, and too few young people. They have this huge crushing demographic crisis as a result of the One-Child Policy. And if people don't start having more children, they're going to have a vastly diminished workforce to support a huge aging population."
- On the bottom right, there's a huge mass of people walking along a red path, which leads up to a shadowy hole. The yellow box next to the huge mass of people says "anti-Japanese education", the red path is marked "illegal immigration", and the shadowy hole is labelled as "The Dark Society". The idea is this: due to the events of World War II, Japan has a spotty relationship with its neighboring countries, especially China and South Korea. According to BBC World Service polls, almost 80% of people in those countries view Japan negatively (thus the "anti-Japanese education" label). Yet, people from China and South Korea also make up the bulk of illegal immigrants into the country (thus "illegal immigration"). This has led to an underlying fear in Japanese society that "people raised to hate Japan will have no problem committing crimes once they're here." (Thus "The Dark Society"). However, according to statistics from the Justice Ministry, the actual percentage of immigrants in Japan who commit crime is quite small (0.4%).
- To the left of the One-Child Policy puddle, there's a yellow figure sticking out of a hole. It has "Oshira-sama" written on its chest, which is the name of a house god revered in the Tohoku region of Japan. They're said to protect people's homes, cure women's diseases, and watch over children.

- Moving up to the top right of the picture, there's a sun up in the sky, but it's labelled "Artificial Sun". This is referring to China's Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak, an experimental fusion energy reactor in Hefei. Testing with it began in 2006, and it got the nickname "artificial sun" since it simulates the fusion process that happens in stars.
- The grey tower below the sun is labelled "Roppongi Hills". Roppongi Hills is a development project that opened in Tokyo's Roppongi district in 2003. It has restaurants, cafes, an art museum, and more, and at the center of it all is the 54-story Mori Tower. Some of the space in the tower is used for offices, but there are expensive residential apartments in there as well. Those who are rich and famous enough to live in Roppongi Hills are called the "Hills Tribe".
- Beneath the tower, next to a man at a desk, it says "Designed by Aneha". Hidetsugu Aneha was the architect who falsified his earthquake safety data, mentioned in a previous liner note.
- And to the left of the man at his desk, there's a big white word bubble that says "Yutori Education". Introduced in the late 1980s, the Yutori Education Policy was meant to be a gentler approach to learning, so there would be less focus on rote memorization, and more freedom for independent learning. Of course, this wasn't without its drawbacks. A more relaxed curriculum turned into lower national scores in literacy and math.
- There's a gaping chasm to the right of the tower, and a blue puddle pointing down it says "female announcers". Female television announcers in Japan are treated like models or idols, and there are even popularity contests to choose the year's most popular one.
- Off to the left, there's a bunch of giant eyes leering at a girl. The girl is marked as a "net idol", and all the wandering eyeballs are marked as "strangers' eyes".
- The road heading southeast from all the eyes is labelled as "Maiden's Road", which is an area in Ikebukuro that has a high concentration of shops devoted to female yaoi fans.
- There's a giant hole near the road, which is labeled as "Toranoana". Toranoana is a store that specializes in anime and manga items. "Tora no ana" means "tiger's den" in Japanese, but the word for den (穴) can also mean "hole".
- Across the street from Toranoana, there are two other buildings: "KBooks" and "Real CP". "K-Books" is a second-hand otaku shop that also sells doujinshi. As for "Real CP", don't be alarmed - in Japanese, "CP" is shorthand for "coupling", or pairing characters in a romantic relationship. The English anime fandom tends to call it "shipping". So "Real CP", in this instance, means shipping real-life people such as celebrities.
- At the end of Maiden's Road, there's a red shrine gate and a pentagram. These two things are usually associated with onmyouji, a title for people who performed divination and prayers in ancient Japan. From the late 80s to the late 2000s, there was something of an "onmyouji boom" in Japan. It began with the 1983 serialized novel Teito Monogatari, which re-imagined 20th century Tokyo meshed together with the occult. That novel went on to influence all sorts of anime, manga and games, such as Tokyo Babylon, Shin Megami Tensei, and Shounen Onmyouji.
- Moving back to the left again, behind the gawking eyes, there's a giant wall. This is labelled "The Heart's Wall". Think of it like an A.T. Field from Neon Genesis Evangelion.
- On the other side of The Heart's Wall, separated from society, is a big grey blob that labels this whole area "NEET Land".

- NEET Land connects with the Annual Income Wall via a doorway marked as “Livedoor”, the web portal and blog platform. Some NEETs use the Internet as a path to wealth.
- On the darker side of NEET Land, there's one person punching another near The Heart's Wall, with the letters “DV” next to them. “DV” is an acronym for “domestic violence”.
- To the left, there's a big white spiky word bubble that says “The Right to Collective Defense”. This is a political term for the idea that if a country is attacked, that country's allies have the right to come to its defense.



- Lodged within The Heart's Wall, we can see a person hiding in a hole. Next to the hole is the word “stalker”.
- Floating up above NEET Land, there's a giant two-way arrow that looks like something out of a board game. Starting from the square on the far right, it says “Murakami Fund”. This is the same fund that was represented in this mural as a wall next to the cliff of poverty.
- The next square to the left says “Trial by Ordeal”. Trials by ordeal were an ancient practice to determine guilt. If the person in question could survive or succeed in a painful trial, they were declared innocent. Trials by combat were the most common, but there have also been trials by fire, water, even poison.
- The next square to the left is “Murakami Fund” again.
- The next square to the left is “Rakuten”. If you remember from previous liner notes, this is the company that paired up with Livedoor to create a new baseball team, the Rakuten Eagles.
- The next square to the left is “Murakami Fund” yet again.
- The next square to the left says “Middle Margin”. In the business world, there are companies who act as intermediaries between sellers and buyers. Grocery stores, for example, are the intermediary between farmers and the people who buy their produce. “Middle margin”, then, is a term for the profit these companies make. There are several legit examples of business intermediaries... and there are also several bad examples, like paper companies that only exist to shuffle information and siphon profits.
- The final square, which ends in an arrow near the middle of the mural, says “Insurance Payout”. Apparently, if you make it through the treacherous game of business, this is where you end up.
- The arrow is pointing into a giant golden ball at the top-center of the mural, which says “money”. In fact, everything nearby is pouring into it - the Whitebands from the factory, waves from Television Saitama, and a whole bunch of lottery tickets. And it all stays behind the Annual Income Wall.
- On the other end of the game-board arrow, the far right side, there's a man who seems to have lost his footing. The kanji on his back says “Taizou”, as in Japanese politician Taizou Sugimura. Sugimura dropped out of college in 2004, but in 2005, he unexpectedly won a seat in the House of Representatives. At just 27 years old, he was the youngest-ever member of the Diet of Japan - and it showed. His wide-eyed excitement over the perks of being a politician, like first-class tickets on the shinkansen and eating at expensive restaurants, betrayed his inexperience. His colleagues were mortified, and the media ate it up.

- The arrow that Taizou is sliding along headfirst is marked as “The Fast Track to Success”.
- This Fast Track points toward a white cloud labelled “Potato Land”. This is a play on the “Potato Party”, an annual Japanese charity concert which ran from 1985 to 2007.
- Right below the Potato Party cloud, there’s a yellow circle that says “Going through the motions of being husband and wife”. This is likely referring to the Potato Party’s founder, enka singer Shinichi Mori, and his wife Masako Mori. They divorced in 2006.
- And finally, near the base of the Fuji-esque mountain, there’s another version of the singer Coc-co. This is her “now” version, after coming out of retirement in 2006. She’s belting out the words “the future”, “the present”, and “the afterlife”.

KAORI

Majiru’s book is about his favorite blogger, Kaori Manabe. In tiny English text, the book says “No.Make”, which is a play on No.Mark, a photo collection she released in 2002.

IN SPRING, ONE SLEEPS A SLEEP THAT KNOWS NO DAWN

This is the first line of a famous poem called “Spring Morning”, written by the Chinese poet Meng Haoran during the Tang dynasty.

BUDOU-GA OKA HIGH SCHOOL

Today, the school is named after Josuke Higashikata’s high school in Jojo’s Bizarre Adventure Part 4: Diamond is Unbreakable.

ZHUANGZI, WHO HAD BASED HIS LIFE AROUND CAREFREE WANDERING...

Zhuangzi is an ancient Chinese compilation of anecdotes and stories written by a Taoist sage. And this Lupin-style text is part of one of its most famous passages, “The Butterfly Dream”.

THE TALE OF HOICHI THE DREAMLESS

This is another reference to the ghost story “The Tale of Hoichi the Earless”, mentioned in a previous liner note.

"EVER SINCE TEZUKA-SENSEI BANNED THEM, "DREAM" ENDINGS HAVE BEEN TABOO IN MANGA."

Osamu Tezuka, the creator of Astro Boy, Kimba the White Lion, and dozens of other foundational works, wrote a book in 1977 called How to Draw Manga. Among all the other advice in the book, he recommends staying away from dream endings, which don’t usually sit well with the reader.

INSIDE A DREAM

In Japanese, this is “Yume no Naka e”, which is the name of a 1973 song by Yousui Inoue. The song was incredibly popular, and ended up being used in movies, TV shows and commercials for years. Anime fans might know it best from His and Her Circumstances, which used it as an ending theme.

AOI SHISHIDO NOMURA

Along with these three, there's a fourth kid in the back with glasses on. That makes it hard to read his face, but from what can be seen, it's most likely “Akama”. Put them all together, and you get Masahiko Aoi, Jiro Shishido, Hiroshi Akama, and Tadahisa Nomura - the members of a vocal group named Honey Knights. They performed songs for several anime and tokusatsu series in the 60s and 70s.

NOT A BALANCED BREAKFAST



Eating during class is absolutely not allowed - but not only is Chiri breaking the rule, she's eating “Cop Noodle” (a parody of the real-life ramen brand Cup Noodle) and drinking Jolt Cola. Jolt Cola first appeared in 1985, with the slogan “All the sugar and twice the caffeine.” It contained 5.9 milligrams of caffeine per fluid ounce of soda - just under the FDA's maximum allowance of 6 milligrams. However, once other energy drinks such as Red Bull started to appear, Jolt's market began to shrink, and the company filed for bankruptcy in 2009.

FUSHIDARA VS. YOKOSHIMA BY PARBEE

Fushidara vs. Yokoshima is a real song, released in 1985 by a band called the Barbee Boys. Fushidara vs. Yokoshima means “Immoral vs. Evil”.



"EVEN IF SOMEONE DIES!"



The image in the background is a parody of Pai and Yakumo, two characters from the manga 3x3 eyes. Yakumo is fatally wounded by a demon, but Pai doesn't want him to die, and ends up using magic to merge his soul with hers.

"EVEN IF CHARACTERS ABRUPTLY CHANGE!"

Kaere flies onto the screen here, wearing a bikini and knee-high boots. She even has little oni horns! Basically, she looks like Lum, the main character from Rumiko Takashi's classic Urusei Yatsura.

"AN USUI-KUN WHO COMMANDS ATTENTION!"



Kagerou is standing in an odd pose, with his right arm crossing his body and his splayed-out left hand covering his face. This is Jonathan Joestar's pose from the cover of volume 4 of the Jojo's Bizarre Adventure manga.

YOUR PRESENT IS IN QAR

QAR is an abbreviation for the Qatari riyal, the currency of the State of Qatar. In 2001, the Emir of Qatar decreed that the riyal would have a fixed exchange rate with the US dollar, at 3.64 QAR to 1 USD.

ARTHUR DARIUS GERMAINE FRANCIS

There are two other names that were too close to the sides to be subtitled: Louis and Georges. Put them all together, and you get Les Six, a famous group of six composers who lived in France in the early 1900s. They were Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Germaine Taille-ferre, Francis Poulenc, and Georges Auric.

"KOMORI-SAN IS PLAYING OUTSIDE!"



There's a girl playing volleyball with Kiri, with her hair tied back in a ribbon. She's Kozue Ayuhara, the main character of the 1968 manga/anime series Attack No. 1.

KAZE NI KAIZOU



The text here is a play on Kouji Kumeta's previous manga, *Katte ni Kaizou*. But the image is based on an actual billboard in Osaka! In real life, the sign says "Kaze ni Kaigen" ("When you have a cold, trust Kaigen"). Kaigen is a pharmaceutical company that specializes in cold medicine.

The billboard next to it should also be familiar to those who saw season 1 of *Zetsubou-sensei*. It's the Running Man, a giant LED advertisement for Glico candy that was installed in 1935, and has since become a famous tourist attraction.

Both of these billboards are near the Ebisu Bridge in Osaka, which is where Matoi's currently standing.

(And by the way, the little banners under the *Kaze ni Kaizou* sign spell out "Momoiro Kakarichou", which was Kafuka's nickname for Nozomu in the very first episode of season 1.)

VOICE ACTORS > 2CH > MASTER

If you remember from episode 3's liner notes, Kenjiro Hata (Kouji Kumeta's former assistant) only got in touch with Kouji because voice actresses asked him to do so. Well, this is the updated version of Kouji Kumeta's "influence chart".

As the story goes, when Kenjiro Hata drew the end card for episode 5, Kouji was touched. After all, Kouji hadn't asked Kenjiro to do it, and the two hadn't been in touch for quite some time. So Kouji brought up the subject, and asked Kenjiro what prompted him to do such a kind thing.

Kenjiro answered, "It's because people were complaining about it online."

Thus, Kouji's dreams of being esteemed by his student were shattered. Even random scrubs on 2-channel held more sway over Kenjiro than he did.

"DO BABIES DREAM?"

This line is the catchphrase from a 1975 commercial for a pediatric medicine called Uzukyumeigan. Made from ingredients like ginseng, herbs, bear gallbladders and gallstones from a cow, its purpose is to soothe babies who aren't necessarily sick, but just generally fussy.

"OR STARRING IN A PAMPERS COMMERCIAL!"

The censored name is meant to be Pampers, the American brand of baby products (such as diapers) that are sold worldwide.

HEEEERE'S NAMI

When Nami grabs an axe and smashes through the classroom door, it's an homage to the famous "Here's Johnny" scene from the 1980 horror movie *The Shining*.



"TO AWAKEN THE ONE TRUE GOD MEGANEDA..."

In 1997, political activist Mitsuo Matayoshi founded the World Economic Community Party. He was trained as a Protestant preacher, but eventually he came to believe that he himself was God, and called himself The One True God Matayoshi Jesus Christ. His ultimate goal was to become Secretary-General of the United Nations, alter the world's economic system to be based on agriculture, and send all foreigners back to their home nations. However, he was never elected.

(And of course, Kafuka's golden statue is an image of journalist Yoshiko Sakurai.)

"MY DREAM IS NOT YET OVER!"

The baseball player who shows up here has an orange and black jersey that says "Hara", with the number 88. He's meant to be Tatsunori Hara, a former player with the Yomiuri Giants. When Hara retired in 1995, this line is what he said. He then went on to become the Giants' manager, and led the team to three Japan Series championships.

"THERE IS NO ENDING!"

This is fitting thing for Harumi to say as she draws yaoi. After all, the term "yaoi" is a portmanteau of three phrases: "no buildup" (yama nashi), "no ending" (ochi nashi), and "no meaning" (imi nashi).

"HI THERE! WE'RE THE MUPPET PUPPETS!"



This is a play on the Japanese comedy duo Puppet Muppet. The comedians are two fluffy hand puppets, a cow and a frog, and they specialize in dark humor.

Nozomu's puppets, however, are a horse (馬) and a deer (鹿). If you combine the kanji for these two animals, you get the classic anime insult "baka" (馬鹿), meaning "idiot".

"THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN SANMA IN MEGURO!"

Sanma is a type of fish known as Pacific saury, and it's the center of a famous rakugo skit called Meguro no Sanma. As the story goes, a feudal lord was traveling in Meguro when he tried some grilled sanma given to him by a farmer. He loved it! Once he returned home, he asked his retainers to make him some sanma. They prepared it the way a feudal lord's fish should be prepared: steamed, with all the bones removed. But when the lord tried it, he was disappointed with the taste. This led to his famous punchline: "There's nothing better than sanma in Meguro!" (The joke is, Meguro is far from the ocean. What the lord enjoyed was the common way it was cooked, but he doesn't realize that at all.)

DREAMS COME TRUE'S DREAM ENDING

The Japanese pop band Dreams Come True started out in 1988 as a trio: Miwa Yoshi-da, Masato Nakamura, and Takahiro Nishikawa. However, in 2003, Nishikawa left to pursue a solo career. The band continued on as a duo, and as of this writing, they're still performing.

Anime and video game fans might know the group from their collaboration with Sega. They composed the music for the first two Sonic the Hedgehog games on the Genesis.

"AHH! I MADE A BOO—"

This is the start of a popular catchphrase from comedian Yoshio Kojima. The full line is "Ahh! I made a boo-boo!" ("Aa, heta koita!")

JANUARY 29TH, JUNE 26TH, JULY 5TH, OCTOBER 12TH, JANUARY 9TH OF THE FOLLOWING YEAR, JANUARY 18TH

The dates in this Lupin-style text are all related to protests that happened at the University of Tokyo in the late 1960s.

- On January 29th, 1968, students in the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Medicine officially went on indefinite strike, to protest the internship system that was in practice at that time. Graduates were required by law to serve internships in their field for at least a year before they were able to take a practitioner's exam and gain a medical license. However, there was no guarantee that their internships would be paid, and they weren't allowed to hold a second job during the internship period.
- On June 26th, 1968, the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Letters also joined the strike.
- On July 5th, 1968, the students came together to form the University of Tokyo Zengaku Kyoutou Kaigi ("All-Campus Joint Struggle Committee"). The College of Arts and Sciences joined the strike.
- On October 12th, 1968, the Faculty of Law joined the strike. At that point, all ten of the university's faculties were officially on strike.
- As the months went by, the strike became more violent. On January 9th, 1969, the Zengaku Kyoutou Kaigi attacked the Minsei (another group of students associated with the Japanese Communist Party), and riot police were called to the campus. Most of the movement fell apart at that point, but those most dedicated to the cause barricaded themselves in Yasuda Hall.
- On January 18th, thousands of police stormed Yasuda Hall, and in the end, over 600 people were arrested.

CONCEALED SOLDIER

This title is a spoof on Katai Tayama's war story One Soldier. He wrote it in 1908 after being sent to Manchuria as a war correspondent.

HONORED ANCESTORS

When Nozomu is describing what "oyashirazu" means, we see a funeral marker sitting on a table. The name written on the stone is Mangain Kurayaminosuke ("Prince of Dark Manga") - this is the posthumous Buddhist name that Kouji Kumeta was given at his fake funeral. (See season 1's liner notes for details!)

OYA (TSUNKU) SHIRAZU

Nozomu says that "Kago-chan and Tsuji-chan's oyashirazu are no longer oyashirazu." If you remember from a previous liner note, Ai Kago got caught smoking at age 15, and Nozomi Tsuji got pregnant and had to stop performing. Thus, these two girls' secrets are no longer secrets to their parents - or in this case, their manager, Tsunku♂.

WITHOUT HIS PARENTS KNOWING, THE CHILD VANISHED INTO THE FOAM OF THE WAVES...

This poem pasted on the wall is a real poem. Though the true author is unknown, the poem is attributed to the wife of Taira no Yorimori, a famous military commander from the Heian period. This poem is considered to be the origin of the term "oyashirazu".

OYASHIRAZU KOSHIRAZU IS IN NIIGATA PREFECTURE

There really is an area in Niigata Prefecture called Oyashirazu Koshirazu. ("Oyashirazu" means "the parents don't know", and "Koshirazu" means "the children don't know".) It's a scenic stretch of cliffs along the ocean, about 15km long.

SIGNS, SIGNS, EVERYWHERE THERE'S SIGNS



As Nozomu and his students go out to look for examples of oyashirazu, we're shown a row of buildings with vertical white signs:

- **SHAFT:** This is the animation company behind the *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei* anime.
- **Warasaki:** This is the names of two popular Japanese izakaya combined into one: Wara-wara, and Murasaki. Murasaki has locations in Tokyo and Osaka, and Wara-wara has several locations across the country. (Izakaya, by the way, are bars that also serve food and snacks.)
- **Izakaya Muratami:** And this is another izakaya combo name. This time, it's Murasaki combined with Watami. Watami is a large chain that even has locations internationally.
- **Pastoral:** Studio Pastoral is another animation house that helped create *Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei*.
- **Snack Ami:** There is a long column of tiny signs on the rightmost building, which are all references to various female stars who have a connection with record producer Tetsuya Komuro. This first one is a nod to Ami Suzuki, a Japanese singer/songwriter. Her production company, AG Communication, was underpaying their artists in order to evade taxes. Ami's parents sued the company over it and won... but as a result, Ami was blacklisted from the entertainment industry. (The story has happy ending, though - in 2005, she was able to make a comeback, and as of this writing, she's still performing.) Tetsuya Komuro was her sponsor at the beginning of her career, and stayed on as her producer until her blacklisting.
 - **Tomo:** A reference to pop star Tomomi Kahara. Tetsuya Komuro was her producer and eventually the two started dating. But it didn't last long, and after their messy breakup amid a string of scandals, her popularity fell and never quite recovered.
 - **Tooko:** There is a female singer whose real name is unknown, but her stage name is tohko. Her debut song "BAD LUCK ON LOVE ~BLUES ON LIFE~" released in January of 1998, and stayed in the top 20 for nine consecutive weeks. Tetsuya Komuro was her producer, as well.
 - **Hitomi:** This is referring to Hitomi Furuya, whose stage name is simply Hitomi. Anime fans might know her from her song "I Am", which was used as an opening song for *Inuyasha*. Tetsuya Komuro was the one who discovered her in 1993, when she was singing at an audition. He signed her to Avex and became her producer.
 - **Keiko:** This is referring to Keiko Yamada, whose stage name is KCO. She was the lead vocalist for a band called Globe, but eventually started her own solo career. In 2002, she married Tetsuya Komuro (who was also in Globe), but sadly, the two divorced in 2021.
 - **Satomi:** Satomi Fukunaga was an idol and singer back in the 1980s. She was one of the founding members of Onyanko Club, a large all-girl pop idol group. Tetsuya Komuro helped produce some of their songs.
 - **Saori:** Last but not least, Saori Yagi is a former pinup idol and singer who also became an actress. Tetsuya Komuro was a fan of her work, and helped produce some of her songs as well.

HOTEL LOVE MACHINE

“Love Machine” is the name of a Morning Musume song that released in 1999. It was a huge hit, and as of this writing, is still their best-selling single with over 1,760,000 copies sold.

SLIPPING THROUGH THE CRACKS



Between Hotel Love Machine and Miyabi, there are two little signs in the alley. One says “My Pudding”, which is a reference to pop idol group V-U-den and their hit single “Ice Cream and My Pudding”. The other says “Angel”, a reference to their follow-up single, “Loving Angel Heart”.

MIYABI

The other building off to the left is marked as “Miyabi”, which is the name of pop star Miyabi Natsuyaki’s photobook that she released in 2007.

ANIMATES

This is a spoof on Animate, Japan’s largest retailer of anime and video game merchandise.

SECRET CARDBOARD FORT

Maria and Majiru’s cardboard fort is made up of several different boxes. Most of the references on the boxes are straightforward (Shaft, Kumeta) but a couple might need clearing up. “Ice Hockey Club” is referring to Kouji Kumeta’s first manga series, Go!! Southern Ice Hockey Club. And “Sawashiro Oranges” is a reference to Miyuki Sawashiro, the voice actress who plays Maria (along with many other roles across many other series!).

THE PASSWORD IS YUUKI

“Yuuki” means “courage”, and The Password is Courage is the name of a live-action drama that aired on Fuji TV in 2000. It’s about a small town fighting back against a company that wants to build an industrial waste facility nearby.

A HIDDEN APPLICATION

There are a lot of papers strewn across the floor in the cardboard fort, and many of them are illegible. However, there’s one next to Maria that we can still read: it’s a request form to join a religious organization called “Zunzu****”. This is a reference to Zunzunkyou no Yabou (“Zunzunkyou’s Ambitions”), a 1994 arcade game from Sega. You control a little jizo statue who floats around the screen shooting members of a fictional cult called Zunzunkyou.

EMMANUELLE VISUAL BOOK

Emmanuelle is an erotic novel series that was originally thought to be written by Thai-French novelist Emmanuelle Arsan, but it was eventually discovered that the books were written by her husband, Louis-Jacques Rollet-Andriane. In 1974, the story was turned into an X-rated movie, which is probably what this “visual book” is supposed to be based on.

“THE FIST HOLE YOU HID BEHIND A POSTER.”



The poster is for Nobody Knows, the movie about abandoned children which was mentioned in a previous liner note.

HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER DVD

High School Teacher is a live action drama from 1993. It dealt with all sorts of social taboos like homosexuality, rape, and suicide.

CREAM LEMON

Cream Lemon is one of the first hentai anime ever made. It released in 1984.

BAKASU CLINIC

This is a play on Takasu Clinic, a chain of plastic surgery clinics with several locations across Japan.

QUESTIONABLE CONTENT

There are all sorts of dubious items stacked and scattered around the room:

- Daiakuji, an erotic video game from Alice Soft
- COMIC Kairakuten, a hentai manga magazine
- A photo book filled with pictures of actress Aoi Miyazaki
- A DVD of Maido Osawagaseshimasu (“Thanks for Always Putting Up With Me”), a 1985 live-action TV series that starred a junior high school student, but also featured sexual themes and humor, along with near-nudity.

21ST CENTURY BOYS

This is the sequel series to Naoki Urasawa’s critically acclaimed manga 20th Century Boys. The final chapter released in July 2007, bringing the whole story to a close.

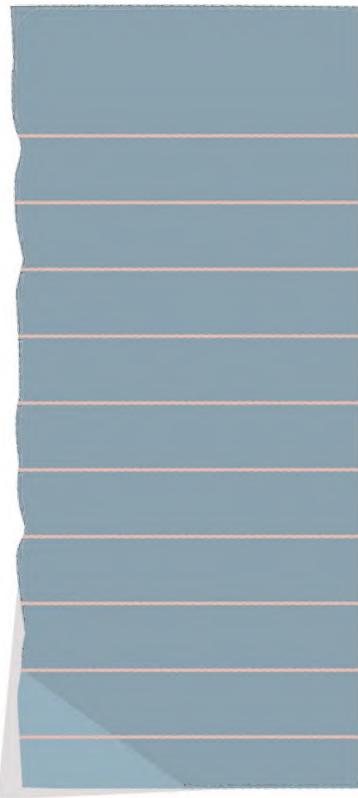
THE GREAT KING OF TERROR

The famous 16-century French astrologer Nostradamus predicted: “In the year 1999, seven months. From the sky will come the King of Terror,” and many took it to mean that sometime in July 1999, the world would end.

“HOW CAN SO MANY THINGS BE OYASHIRAZU?!”

Time for another giant list! Many of them are easy to understand, but here are the ones that might need a little extra explanation:

- **What they write on your indoor school shoes:** The Japanese tradition of not wearing shoes indoors also applies to schools. At the entrance, each student has a shoe locker where they swap out their regular shoes for a pair of lighter indoor shoes. Then, at the end of the day, they swap back. Writing on someone’s indoor shoes, then, is a type of bullying where someone writes dirty things on shoes that the victim will have to wear around all day.
- **School lunches aren’t free:** There have been a rising number of parents who think that, because elementary and middle school are compulsory, that lunch is provided there for free. However, this is incorrect. Municipalities pay for the labor to cook the lunch, but parents are expected to pay for the food itself.



- **Their daughter is a Fanroad regular:** Fanroad was a long-running Japanese subculture magazine that started in 1980. Though its main focus was anime, it also covered things like food, games, tokusatsu, even current affairs, and almost all of the content was generated by readers.
- **The wall scrolls hanging in your room cost 10,000 yen:** That's roughly \$100.
- **Cuckoo chicks:** Some cuckoo birds are brood parasites, which means they lay their eggs in other birds' nests. The chicks are then raised by other birds, and the original parents never see them.
- **Parties in the M*ta family's basement:** Yoshiko Mita is an award-winning actress who's been in several films and television shows. Her second son, however, has not led a charmed life. He's been arrested at least five times, and has a record of drug abuse and physical assault. The implication here is that Yoshiko had no idea what sort of parties her son was throwing down in the basement.

• **Their son succeeding to the stage name Shozo:** Rakugo performers have stage names, and some of them are very prestigious. They get handed down through the generations, as long as the son is following well in his father's footsteps. In 1930, Takezaburo Ebina earned the name Shozo and became Shozo Hayashiya VII. However, that name wasn't passed along to his son. Instead, the "Shozo" name was loaned out to another family, and his son took up the name Sanpei Hayashiya I. Many years later, in 2003, Sanpei's son Kobuhei announced that he was reclaiming the mantle of "Shozo" for the family, and would henceforth be known as Shozo Hayashiya IX. However, his father Sanpei could make no comment on it, since he had already passed away back in 1980.

• **Their son trying to fire the Solar Ray:** This is a reference to the 1979 anime Mobile Suit Gundam. In the show, the Principality of Zeon, led by the Zabi family, had constructed a giant space cannon called the Solar Ray. However, Degwin Zabi, the Sovereign of the Principality of Zeon, had lost his heart for war. He arranged to meet with the Earth Federation and negotiate peace... But as Degwin set off in his spaceship and approached the Federation flagship, Degwin's son Ghiren ordered the Solar Ray to be fired, vaporizing both his father and a third of the Federation's fleet in one blow.

• **Their son using a notebook to kill people:** In the 2003 manga/anime series Death Note, a high school boy named Light Yagami finds a notebook called the "Death Note". It allows him to kill almost anyone, simply by writing their name in the book. He starts using it to kill high-profile criminals, which immediately draws the attention of the authorities, leading to a global manhunt. However, even though Light's father is head of the Japanese Police Task Force, he never finds out that his son is the killer.

• **Their son's manga being made into an anime:** According to interviews, Kouji Kuma never told his parents that Sayonara, Zetsubou-sensei was made into an anime.

• **The current state of an anime being unknown to its birth parent (the manga creator):** Manga creators rarely have much involvement with anime adaptations. Once in a while they might be asked to give their impressions or input, but certainly not often. The anime is almost always considered a distinct creation with its own separate staff.

THE NEW BOOK OF PROPHECY

In the manga series 20th Century Boys, a group of young boys thought up a fantastic scenario about how the future would go - villains would come to destroy the world, and they would fight back against them. They wrote down this scenario and called it "The Book of Prophecy". However, there was a second book, written by someone known only as "Friend". It was "The New Book of Prophecy", and its contents were much darker: assassinations, culling of the Earth's population, and the world falling into ruin.

If you look closely, on the wall in Zetsubou-sensei, there's another piece of paper next to this one, with an eye painted on a hand pointing up. This is very similar to the symbol that Friend wears on his mask, which is an eye painted on a hand pointing up, all enclosed within another giant eye.

THEY DON'T KNOW THEIR SON IS HOMELESS

Nowadays, Hiroshi Tamura is part of a successful comedy duo called Kirin. However, back when he was in fifth grade, his mother died of rectal cancer. After that, his father was also diagnosed with rectal cancer, but his surgery was successful, and he lived. However, while he was in the hospital, he was fired from his company. With no income, the two eventually lost their home, and Hiroshi was separated from his father. Hiroshi ended up living in a nearby park, eating weeds to survive. In 2007, he published an autobiography about his years of poverty, titled *The Homeless Student*.

I'M TIRED. I'M GOING HOME. -OKINA

Megumi Okina is an actress and singer who has starred in several films, including the original Japanese version of *Ju-on: The Grudge*. In 2007, she announced that she was retiring from show business. (It didn't last long, though - she was back a year later in a remake of the horror film *Shutter*.)

I DIDN'T DO IT. -UEKUSA

Kazuhide Uekusa used to be an economist and professor at Waseda University, until he was caught using a mirror to peep up a high school girl's skirt in 2004. Two years later, he was arrested again for groping a 17-year-old on a train, and then attempting to hang himself with his necktie when he was caught.

"SHOWA 83. THE TODAI RIOTS WERE STILL RAGING ON."



You might remember from a previous liner note that Showa 83 doesn't exist. It would equal out to the year 2008 (the year this show aired).

As for the Todai Riots, "Todai" is a nickname for the University of Tokyo ("Tokyo Daigaku" in Japanese). So this is a reference to the student protests of 1968 that

were mentioned in the earlier Lupin-style text. In fact, the building that Nozomu is hanging from looks just like Yasuda Hall, which became a battleground between occupiers and riot police in January 1969.

APPARENTLY YOU SHOULD TOSS PULLED UPPER TEETH ON THE ROOF AND LOWER TEETH UNDER THE FLOOR

It's an old custom in Japan that, once your baby teeth fall out, you should throw the upper teeth on the roof, and put the lower teeth under the floor. The idea is that it will guide your new incoming teeth, and help them grow straight and strong.

ZEN-ZA

This is another allusion to Kafuka's Zenkoku Zashiki-warashi Renmei ("Nationwide Zashiki-warashi Alliance"). Though the Zashiki-warashi Alliance isn't a real thing, during the actual protests, each student group would wear helmets of a specific color, with identifying names or symbols on them.

KINSAKUJI

This episode's next episode preview is a play on Yukio Mishima's novel The Temple of the Golden Pavilion, called Kinkakuji in Japanese. It's loosely based on an actual arson event at the Kinkaku Temple in 1950, and tells the story of a Buddhist acolyte who is determined to burn down Kinkaku Temple.

"Kinkaku" means "golden pavilion", but "Kinsaku" means "a way of making money". So in this spoofed version of the story, someone has decided that they need to burn the temple down and collect the insurance payment. The would-be arsonist declares that "If a single pillar stands, it won't be declared a total loss" - this is based on an urban myth that if part of a burned building is still standing, even if it's just a single pillar, then the insurance payout won't be as large.

Also, "the palatial estate of the Egawas" is referring to Tatsuya Egawa, the manga author who created Golden Boy. He's since moved on to making adult films and appearing on TV shows.

AS YOU CAN TELL, THE LINER NOTES ARE NOT YET COMPLETE.



However, this will continue to be updated until all episodes and OVAs are finished! Be sure to follow **@rightstufanime** and **@nozomient** on social media to know when new updates are dropped!